

SERMONS

PREACHED on several

SUBJECTS

AND

OCCASIONS,

WITH SOME

LECTURES:

By the LEARNED

WILLIAM DUNLOP,

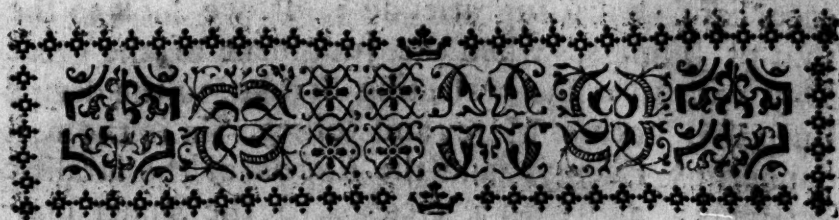
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S E R M O N I.

ISAIAH i. 5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint.*

6. *From the Sole of the Foot, even unto the Head, there is no Soundness in it; but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores.*

THE holy Apostle, designing to represent the evil and poisonous Nature of Sin in the most significant Expressions, does with a noble Emphasis call it *exceeding sinful*: For indeed there was nothing, beside it self, that could be a fit Emblem of its inconceivable Loathsomeness and Abomination. If we consider it in a Relation to God the supreme Governor of the World, it is a Rebel against the almighty Creator; and a Traitor to the most righteous King; with respect to the Tenderness of our heavenly Father, and the Love

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of a Redeemer, it is the most unnatural Disobedience, and basest Ingratitude : If we look to the End of Things, when the Judgment of the great Day will give the perfecting Stroke to the divine Purposes, both of Mercy and Justice, Sin is the most dangerous Enemy, and the Excess of the fatallest Madness ; and with a Regard to the Sinner himself, and the Nature and Capacity of an immortal Spirit, it is the Disgrace and Disease of the Soul, its vilest Shame and mortal Sickness. It is in this last View of it, which I design at this Time, thro' the Assistance of God, to represent Sin, *namely*, as the Sickness and Disease of the Soul : That from a serious Consideration of the Filthiness and Weakness, the Deformity and Danger of our State, we may be stirred up to *lothe and abhor our selves in Dust and Ashes*, be ashamed of our Impurity and Ugliness, and possessed with an affecting Sorrow for our Folly and Ingratitude ; and being roused up from our fatal Lethargy, may, by a godly Repentance, and a lively Faith, bring our diseased Souls to the Lord who healeth them. That I may save as much Time as may be for this Subject, I shall spend but little of it upon the Context, or Explication of the Words themselves.

That profane and stupid Generation, to which this Prophet delivers his Message, were deep sunk in the Mire of Sin, and so wofully subjected to the slavish Dominion of their Corruptions, that all the merciful Dispensations of a kind Providence had proved ineffectual to reclaim them ; they had stood it out against the most amazing Goodness, and had so hardned Hearts, that Patience and Grace made no softning Impressions upon them : And when God inflicted deserved Judgments, not with the Hatred
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of an Enemy, but with the affectionate Designs of a Father that chastised them for their Profit, they spurned the more at his Laws, and fretfully rejected his Government. So that there being small Likelihood of this Means proving successful, God puts the Question in the fifth Verse, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more*; instead of returning to him that smote them, they would only flee further from their Obedience, and throw off any Remains of his Yoke: And then the Words I have now read, come in as a Reason why Frowns and Chastisements had no Appearance of Success in reclaiming them, *The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint, &c.*

Some take these Words principally with a Respect to the temporal Circumstances of the Jews. The Government had fallen into a weak and deplorable Condition, deprived of its Dignity and Power, exposed to the Arrogancy and Contempt of an insulting Enemy, and all the Confusions of a distracted State: And since all these Judgments had gained nothing upon so obstinate Transgressors, it was likely, that further Corrections would be to as little Purpose. But it appears to be both more native and significant, if we understand what is here said of the spiritual Condition of this sinful Nation, which may be easily applied to every wicked Soul, *There is no Soundness in it, being full of Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores*: For in this Sense it is a very strong Proof of what immediately preceeds, that it was needless for God to strike them any more, since they were altogether corrupted, had no Part free from the Contagion, nor any Remains of filial Duty and Consideration for the Chastisements of a Father to take hold on and influence. Besides that

the Phrases here used, of *Bruises* and *putrifying Sores*, seem, according to the Scripture Stile, more applicable to the Filthiness of Sin, than the Evil of Affliction. I shall therefore, abstracting from the particular Circumstances of *Israel*, consider these Words as a very moving and lively Representation of Sin, as the great Disease of a Spirit, and of the miserable State it reduces a Soul to. And we may shortly divide them into these two Branches. *First*. We have the destructive poisonous Nature of Sin, and the lamentable State of the Person subjected to it, held forth to us in a Variety of very emphatical Expressions : He is indeed *sick and faint*, Sin hath all the Symptoms of the most lothsom and dangerous Disease ; it gives a fatal Wound to all the Powers of a Soul, and bruises its Faculties, so that they lose the heavenly Vigour and Activity of a Spirit, it tarnishes and defaces its Beauty, and renders it noisom and stinking : And, if it be not thoroughly rooted out, the Sores it infects with are putrifying, will end in the Rottenness and total Destruction of the Soul. I shall not further explain the particular Meaning of these Phrases, since what is implied in them, may be better enlarged upon in the Progress of the Discourse. *2dly*. We have, in the Text, represented to us the vast Extent of this Disease : It does not confine it self to the Extremities, and those Members that are of least Use, or infect only some Corner ; no, this Plague hath an universal Contagion, spreads through all the Spirit, seizes on the Vitals : *For the whole Head is sick, the whole Heart is faint*. Those Faculties of the Soul which are the Seat of Direction and Rule, the Judgment and Understanding ; and those which are the Spring of Activity, the Will and Affections, all of them

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them feel the Power of this raging Disease, and are mastered by it : Sin hath got into the Head of a Transgressor, weakens and darkens it, and invaded his Heart, which it renders impure and disorderly; and indeed it may be said of every Man, in some Degree or other, since our Apostacy from God, *That from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot, there is no Soundness in him.*

You will easily see, that from these Words, as I have explained them, this Observation natively follows. That the Soul of every Sinner is *sick* and *faint*, infected by an universal Disease; and that every Iniquity is a *Wound*, a *Bruise* and a *putrifying Sore* in an immortal Spirit. This is a very usual Representation of Sin in Scripture, our blessed Saviour gives it as the Reason of his conversing with Sinners. *Matth. ix. 12. Because the whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick :* And it is one of the glorious Effects of a Redeemer's Sufferings, that *by his Stripes we are healed :* And so when we are converted to him, we are also said to be *healed*; and thus an obstinate Indulgence of this Disease, lands in the *Destruction* and *Death* of the Soul.

In discoursing a little upon this Subject, I shall touch at these three Things. *First*. I shall very shortly shew the Meaning of this Metaphore, the Disease of a Spirit, and when a Soul may be called *sick*. *2dly*. I shall shew, in some Particulars, that Sin is indeed the fatal Disease of a Soul. *3dly*. I shall draw a practical Inference or two.

The *first* Thing I am to speak upon, is very shortly to explain the Import of a Disease, when applied to a Spirit : And we may easily conceive this, if we compare it with the Sickness of a Body from which the Metaphore is taken; for as a Person

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is sick when his usual Health and Strength are impaired, and a Decay in the Vitals makes the Body weak and languishing, when any of its Members, the Hand or the Eye, are rendered unable to perform their proper Functions; when the Blood is tainted, or the Spirits disordered and unsettled, so that they can no more serve their several Uses, with that Sprightliness and Regularity they had in the Firmness of Health; or when a corrupt Habit of Body discovers it self in preternatural Swellings, or any Sores that disfigure the Person and render it lothsome: So, in a Similitude to all these, a Soul may be said to be sick, when its Faculties and Powers, such as the Memory and Understanding, are weakened and impaired, that they can no more exert their native Vigour; when the Affections become low and earthly, and the Desires confined within Bounds that bear no Proportion to the Capacity of a Spirit; when the Reason is infeebled and cannot exert it self in the Conduct of Life; and when the Heart and Will are disordered and unsettled; and in a Word, when the due Proportion and Constitution of the several Faculties of the Soul are depraved, and diverted from these noble Purposes which God hath made them capable of, and they lose their Beauty and Harmony, then a Soul may very properly be said to be sick.

The *second* Head I proposed to speak to, was to shew, in some Particulars, that it is Sin alone which thus renders a Soul sick and diseased: And this will appear, if we consider the several Symptoms and Effects of a Disease, such as,

First. Its weakening a Man and reducing him to a feeble languishing Condition. Our Soul, as it came from God, was endued with noble and vigorous

rous Faculties; an Understanding that extended its Views beyond Time, was filled with the purest and sublimest Truths, God himself and his glorious Perfections were lookt upon with a quick and steady Eye; our Wills had the Order and Activity of a Seraph; and our Affections were as pure and lively as theirs; in a Word, all our Aims were noble and excellent, and each of our Faculties exerted themselves with the Firmness and Strength of an immortal Spirit, and were superior to every Difficulty or Temptation; this was the native Sprightliness and Force of a healthy vigorous Soul: But alas, into how decayed and languishing a State has this destructive Sickneſs brought our Spirits; it hath enervated all our Faculties, clipt the Wings of the Soul, that it can no more mount above this impure and turbulent World, but must crawl about ingloriously upon a miserable Earth; innumerable Prejudices, Luſts and Paſſions darken the Mind, and ſo weaken the Eye of the Soul, that now our poor Views are confined to theſe diſguiſed Nothings, the Pleaſures of Riches and Honours of this momentany Stage; and ſo feeble is our Sight, that it miſtakes Shadows and Dreams for the greateſt Realities, and a falſe Face, which the World masks it ſelf with, for true Beauty and Excellency.

Sin hath ſo wounded our Senſes, that neither the devouring Flaſhes of eternal Flames, ready to catch hold of us, nor the divine Beauties and Glories of the Manſions of Light and Felicity, are perceived by us, or make the leaſt Impreſſions on a diſeaſed Eye. So wofully hath this Conſumption waſted the Vigour of an immortal heavenly Underſtanding, and impaired our Health, that what the Apoſtle ſays, holds true of every Sinner, II. *Pet.* i. 9.

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He is blind and cannot see afar off, is not able to discover the Devices of *Satan* or the Deceitfulness of Sin, but is foolishly imposed upon by outward Colours, which hide the Poison and Death of the fatal Morfel that now is so sweet to him : And how weak are our Affections now become ? these noble Powers that knew no Bounds but an infinite Good, nor could be stopped in their Flight, till they arrived at *Zion* and the Fulness of its Joys, now terminate upon the little Trifles of this Earth, and are so weak as to be stopped short by every perishing Vanity, and, being wounded and bruised by Sin, cannot rise above the Dross and Mud of sensual Delights, nor exert themselves in a Suitableness to the Dignity and Capacity of a Spirit : These Desires which were once animated by so strong an Ambition, as to be satisfied with nothing less than an infinite God and an endless Heaven, are now so amazingly impaired, as to be contented with the deceitful Goods of Time, and sit down upon Honours and Profits that a few Years will put an eternal End to : And then, that Will which had the Life and Activity of a Cherub running with an unwearied Pleasure in the Service of its heavenly King, is now so weakened, that the least Duty fatigues it, the most easy and reasonable Yoke is become an insupportable Burden, and the smallest Impressions of a Temptation quite defeat and enslave it. So that you see Sin hath this great Symptom of a Disease, it hath rendered all the Faculties of the Soul so weak and faint, that the Spirit is become a Servant to the Body, the Reason is subdued by Sense, and Lusts and Passions utterly overcome, at the first Onset, all its Forces that are left.

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And now, when meditating upon this Subject, let each of us look into our own Breasts, where we may find a melancholy Demonstration of the Power of this Disease; and endeavour to be suitably affected with the Thoughts thereof: O my Soul, what a terrible Wound do I find Sin hath given to thee? To what a faint and languishing State are my lifeless and stupid Faculties reduced, altogether unable for the noble Employments, and the quick and lively Operations of these pure angelical Beings, that have God for their Strength and Joy? May I not bemoan my lost Strength and departed Glory, when I have so often experienced, that my firmest Resolutions and strongest Convictions have been put to flight by triumphing Temptations; and that fading perishing Vanities, Lies that do not profit, Nothings that disappear in a few Years, lead me captive at their Pleasure, cheat and deceive me? And oh! my Soul, within how narrow Bounds are thy Faculties confined? Tho' they in their primitive Health move beyond Time, and reach to the Life and Joys of *Zion*; yet now they creep alongst the Earth, and are not able to take a higher Flight: Yea, thou hast now lost thy Dominion; and art fit for nothing, but the same nasty mean Delights with the Beasts that perish; and how oft have thy Designs and Pursuits mingled themselves with the Employment of Dogs and Swine, gratifying present Appetites: And thus thou pinest away in thine Iniquities, so silly and weak as to become the Scorn of an insulting Devil and an ensnaring World: And the most contemptible of these Enemies of our Salvation, and the least Lust and Passion convinces me, as the *Philistines* did *Samson*, that his Strength hath departed from him: And, while I gradually decay, the

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consuming Sickness gets deeper Root, and becomes more incurable, *The whole Head is sick, the whole Heart is faint.* And, if upon such Reflections we be sensible of our Weakness, and grieved and ashamed at the Victories Sin gets over us, let us go out of our selves to him who is *Israel's* Strength and Salvation; apply to that great Physician, who can raise up a dead, or enliven a diseased Soul, that it may be again *strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*: Let us come to Christ, in whom is Strength as well as Righteousness, with the Desires and Dependence of the Church, *Jerem. iii. 22, 23. Return, ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your Backslidings: Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is Salvation hoped for from the Hills, and from the Multitude of Mountains: Truly in the Lord our God is the Salvation of Israel. Psal. cviii. 12. Help, Lord, for vain is the Help of Man, yet through thee we shall do valiantly.*

Thus I have at some Length shewn that Sin is the Disease of the Soul, as it wastes and consumes it, and renders it weak and feeble in all its Faculties and Operations, I shall more briefly mention what follows in the

Second Place. Sin is also the Rage and Disorder of the Spirit, and gives it an irregular Heat, and banishes that Calmness and Order which are necessary to a due State of Health. In the former respect, Sin was the Decay, and on this, if I may so speak, 'tis the malignant Fever of a Soul. The healthful Constitution of a Spirit, in this respect, consists in the due and regular acting of all the Faculties, with that Coolness and Consideration that are necessary to preserve the Peace and Wisdom of the Mind, and enable it to act suitably to the Thought-

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Thoughtfulness and Dignity of a rational Being : And as a hasty unusual Flowing of the Blood and Spirits, a quick and interrupted Beating of the Pulse, are Symptoms of a prevailing Fever and a disordered Habit of Body ; so boisterous Passions and ungovernable Lusts, which drive on the foolish Sinner without Leisure, Forethought, and a due Use of the Understanding, are very properly the feverish Distemper of a Soul.

And oh ! what melancholy Confusions does Iniquity cause in the Mind, where there is nothing to be seen but unrestrained Appetites, fierce and turbulent Desires, ever in a Ferment and Rage, which quite distract the Soul, and hurry it on over the Belly of Conscience and Reason ? How irregular does Sin make all the Affections, render them impure and turbid, guided by no certain Rules, nor to be restrained within the justest Bounds, never satisfied and at Rest, but ever rolling from one Vanity to another ? Thus the Sickness of a sinful Soul is represented to us, *Isa. lvii. 26. But the Wicked are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt.*

Would we seriously consider how the Mind is distracted by the eager Desires of a covetous Wretch, when he swallows down Gold ; by the insatiable Thirst of the Ambitious after Riches and Honours ; by the furious Boylings up of Anger and Malice, and the Heat and Fierceness of Revenge ; or by the Swellings of a Man's own Pride and Vanity, which are ready to burst his Spirit : If we considered, I say, what furious Storms these ungodly Passions raise within the Breast, we would be soon convinced that Sin is the Fever and Disease of the Soul, which disturbs all its Operations, and utterly blasts its
Peace

Peace and Serenity, and shamefully subjects it to the Risings of the most beastly and ungovernable Corruptions; for, as the wise Man speaks, *Prov. xxvii. 4. Wrath is cruel, and Anger is outrageous.* And I might appeal to daily Experience, if ever the Body was in such a Fever, as the Souls of some Sinners are in, when tossed about by Ambition, Avarice, or Lust.

And is it not a fit Employment for every one of us, upon a Fast-day, to look into our selves and bewail our Disease, how often our temporal Interests, the Pleasures and Glories of this Earth, have wounded our Reason, and been dored upon by an extravagant Fondness: How many a Time our Inclinations have been unsettled and irregular, our Corruptions inflamed, and every Thing out of Order within. O my Soul, how frequently hast thou been surprised by brutish and unmanly Passions; by Envy at the Prosperity or superior Excellencies of others, by Fretfulness at Disappointments, and cruel Malice at the Instruments of them? What a fearful Wound hath Sin given to our Understandings and Conscience? How hath it made us mad in the Pursuit of this World; and put us all in a Fume, when our Pride and Vanity, our idle Humours and Fancies, have not been indulged and gratified? How much Thoughtlessness and Precipitation stains our whole Conduct? what rash Judgments, and hasty Resolutions, and violent Pursuits of worthless Objects, have kept my Soul in a constant Fever? Yea, how often hath this Fever of the Will and Affections raged to such a Degree, as to make me spurn at the Laws of a Creator; and break out against the Compassions of the Lover of our Souls, because he would not indulge us in our Shame

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Shame and Ruin ; yea, trample upon the Blood of a dying Redeemer ? How oft hath this furious Disease made me betray the sacredest Oaths sworn to a Saviour, abandon my best Friend, and go over to an irreconcilable Enemy, reject the noblest Blessings, and run mad in the Love of a Dream and Shadow ; yea, embrace Death and Hell itself, and refuse to hearken or be reformed ? Can we but shed a Tear, when comparing this disjoyned distracted Frame, with that divine Calm and Composure of Mind we lost by our Departure from God ?

3dly. Sin is the Disease of the Soul, as it robs it of its Beauty and Glory, and renders it impure and lothsome ; as it is an Effect of some Sickneses upon the Body, to beget Sores and Ulcers which disfigure and corrupt it. The divine Beauty of a Soul lies in the Calmness and Harmony of all its Actions and Thoughts, a due Subordination and Proportion of its Faculties to its great Author and to one another, and in the Suitableness of its Pleasures and Projects to its Dignity and Immortality ; and so Holiness is that alone which renders a Spirit comely, and gives its Charms a Lustre incomparably brighter than the Objects of Sense are capable of ; yea, of all the divine Perfections, it is God's Purity and the Beauties of Holiness which chiefly render him amiable : And as this alone makes a Soul lovely, so it is Sin which utterly tarnishes and blots it, ruins the Harmony of the Mind, and renders it the most ugly and abominable Object. What more lothsome Sight, than Reason and Religion trampled under the Feet of base Lusts ; boiling Passions and impure Desires, breaking out all over the Mind in stinking Ulcers and Sores, that are constantly running the most purulent and nasty Filth, such as Anger,

Anger, Malice, Revenge, Ambition, Covetousness, Lust, and other gross and terrene Matter, every one of which is the abominable Thing which God hateth? How nauseous and deformed do earthly Toys, vexatious Projects, airy Honours, dying Power and Greatness look; when they fill up that Place in a Spirit, that ought to be possessed by the exalted Joys of Religion, Love to the greatest Good, and the experimental Knowledge of the Fountain of Being and Happiness? Does not Sin then debase us as low as Hell, and make us vile, robbing us of the Ornaments of Innocence, which were our Beauty and Joy? Justly therefore is a Transgressor likened to a *Dog in his Vomit, and a Sow wallowing in the Mire*. And, when God looked on our deplorable State, he is said, *Ezek. xvi. 5. to have passed by and seen us polluted in our own Blood.*

And now, O my Soul, how mishapen and ugly a Spectacle does thou appear to God and the holy Angels; and how would thou lothe and be frightened at thine own monstrous Deformity, if this woful Disease had not vitiated thine Eyes also? Can I look at this vast Multitude of nasty and impure Thoughts, or low and earthly Inclinations that are crawling within my Breast, and adding to the Stains and Spots that blemish the Soul? Can I look at such a Monster as fleeting Vanities joyned to a never dying Spirit, and immortal Affections glued to transitory Nothings? Can I reflect on the many Times that my Love hath been prostituted to this World, and alienated from God; and that the Father of Lies, that implacable Adversary, hath had more of my Heart than my Maker, my Redeemer, my best Friend as well as righteous Lord? Canst thou consider all this, and not be ashamed at thy
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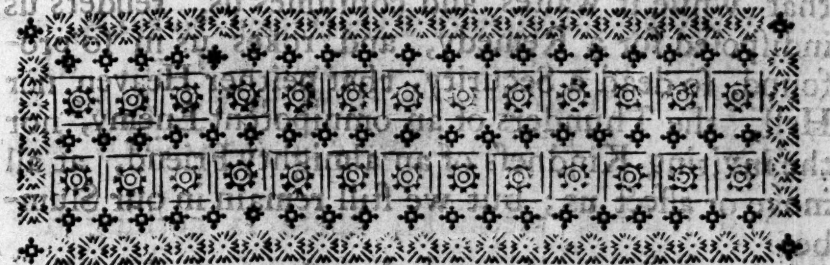
monstrous Irregularity and so nauseous a Plague, hate and abhor thy amazing Uglinefs, and confefs that the *Glory is departed*.

I might mention feveral other Inftances, that would further illuftrate the Nature and Malignity of this Soul Difafe; but, becaufe of your Time, I fhall only add, in the *fourth* Place, that as fome Difafes are not attended with awakning Pains, but ftupify and deaden; that there is a fatal Lethargy as well as a raging Fever: So Sin, in this refpect, is the Difafe of a Soul, that it lays afleep all Thought and Reflection, ftupifies the Confcience, and clofeth the Eyes of the Mind, fo that we neither fee our Sores, nor feel our Sicknefs. And indeed this is the fatal Effect of the Incantments of Sin, that, while *the whole Head is fick, and the whole Heart faint*, they fo far bewitch us, as to make us fancy we are in perfect Health, and need not a Phyfician. The Vanities of this World and the Temptations of *Satan*, firft lull us afleep, and then amufe us with pleafing Dreams, till the Flames of Hell awaken us. If this mortal *opium* had not the fatalleft Strength, would ever Men prefer any Thing to God and Eternity; or fancy they might with Security affront infinite Power, and provoke inexorable Juftice, and run againft the Armies of the Almighty with Impunity? Had not Sin benumbed all our Powers and Faculties, would Men sport about a bottomlefs Pit, and play with devouring Flames? Would they purfue with fo foolifh Thoughtlefsnefs the fleeting Nothings of this World, when the Arrows of Death are every Moment flying round about them, and laying low the moft vigorous of their Friends and Acquaintances, and never awake fo far as to ask, *What they fhall do in the*

End thereof ? And where their trembling Souls are to have their Abode ? Oh ! melancholy Disease ! that while it wastes and consumes us, renders us indisposed for a Remedy, and rokes us in so profound, so dead a Security, that neither Heaven nor Hell, the Thunders of an omnipotent Enemy, nor the inviting Kindness of an almighty Friend, at all move or affect us ; but we still remain in our Slumber.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew, in some Particulars, that Sin is the great Disease of a Soul : And the Discourse having been mostly practical, makes it less necessary for me to insist upon the third Thing proposed, *namely*, to make Application of the Doctrine. I might infer, from what hath been spoken, the false and ignorant Notions which vain proud Man is ready to entertain of himself, since he is indeed a diseased and lothsom Creature, full of Wounds and Bruises ; the absolute Necessity of a Power superior to our own, to cure a Disease so deeply rooted and universally contagious ; and the admiring Thoughts we should entertain of the Love of God, in looking down with Pity and Kindness on such impure deformed Objects : But because your Time is gone, I shall conclude, by naming these two Exhortations to very proper Employments on a Day of Humiliation * * * *

And where their trembling souls are
to have their Abode? Oh! melancholy Disease!



S E R M O N II.

EZEKIEL xviii. 31. *For why will ye die,
O House of Israel?*

IN this Chapter, the blessed God, in the plainest and most moving Mannery reasons with the Children of *Israel*, vindicates the Equity and Goodness of his Procedure towards them; and shews how little Ground there was for these fretful and repining Objections, which they injuriously made against his Government, and what weak Pleas they brought to palliate their Apostacy, and excuse their Obstinacy in Wickedness: And, after having made all this evident beyond Contradiction, he closes the Argument in a Way that became the Father of Mercies and the God of Love, with a most melting Lamentari-

on over their Folly in abandoning themselves to Iniquity, which could not miss to be their Ruin; and with an affectionate Exhortation to them, to return to him their compassionate Lord, who would delight to receive them in the Arms of Mercy, *for he had no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth.*

And indeed, methinks, there is nothing that hath a greater Tendency to move the Bowels of rational Creatures, and work upon their Affections, than such Questions as God puts in my Text; when he, in so earnest a Manner, refers the Matter to ourselves, *What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that ye have departed so far from me? Have I been a barren Wilderness, or a Land of Drought? O my People, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.* There is some Thing in this Procedure so full of Goodness and Tenderness; and, when the infinitely great God that made us, and can, by one Look of his Countenance, scatter about him Rage and Destruction, is at Pains so to bespeak his Creatures, there appears so much endearing Sweetness and Condescension, and such an Unwillingness to give us over, and let us perish in our Iniquities, that it must be a very hard Heart, that can hear his Maker addressing him, without being wrought up into the most passionate Emotions of grateful Affections, and turning his Eyes into Fountains of Tears, that ever he should have offended so good a Master, and departed from such a Friend, who weeps over our perishing Souls, is loth to quit us, and would fain have us to consider the Unreasonableness

of destroying ourselves, *Why will ye die, O House of Israel?*

The Words of my Text offer to our Meditation very plainly these Two important Subjects. 1. The destructive Nature and fatal Tendency of Sin it is the woful Disease, and at length the inevitable Death of the Soul: For it is evident, that *Israel's Dying* here spoken of, is to be understood of their cleaving to their Transgressions, and going on in Iniquity, which was their Ruin. It may relate to the final Issue of a wicked Life, in the everlasting Destruction of Soul and Body, when the Perdition of ungodly Men cometh upon them, and Sin hath its *Wages* paid to it, which are *Death*. Beside which the Text seems plainly to regard the absolute Nature of Sin considered in itself, abstractly from the Execution of the condemning Sentence of the Law, in which respect also it is the Ruin of the Soul. That Moment in which an immortal Spirit departs from God, it flees away from its Life and Happiness; when it submits it self to the accursed Dominion of Lust, Death immediately enters into the Soul, and begins to spread its poisonous Influences, and a woful Disease seizes upon all the Faculties, which gradually weakens and consumes them, till, together with Sin, Death gains an absolute Victory and kills the Soul. Thus, in the holy Scriptures, Sin is frequently compared to a *Plague*, and a *Leprosy*, a *Bruiſe* and a *Wound* given to the Soul; and Transgressors are represented as *pining away in their Iniquities*; and even, while they are in the Land of the Living, they are said to be *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. 2dly. In the Text we have the infinite Unreasonableness and Folly of Men, in indulging Sin,

which is their Ruin, and giving Way to that fatal Disease which is hastning to kill them, *Why will ye die?* I need scarce tell you, that the Question here proposed includes the strongest Affirmation possible; it importing that they could adduce no Plea to justify their Conduct, nor give the least tolerable Account thereof, and that the Case was so plain, that there was no Occasion to aggravate the Charge against them, and make out a laborious Proof thereof. It was enough for God to state the Question, and refer it to their own Conscience and Reason, if they could pretend to the least plausible Allegation. Suitably to these Two Truths contained in the Text, I shall, in discoursing upon it, endeavour, through divine Assistance, to do these Two Things.

1. I shall lay before you some Meditations, tending to confirm and illustrate the Character given to Sin in our Text, that it is the Destruction of him who commits it; and that every Transgressor is in a mortal Decay, and is dying in his Iniquities.

2dly. I shall shew the great Madness and Inexcusableness of this horrid Murder which Men are committing upon themselves, and that they can give no Return to the affecting Question, *Why will ye die?*

After which, if your Time allow, I may make some practical Reflections upon the preceeding Subjects.

As to the *First* of these, *namely*, the Sinner's pining away and dying in his Iniquities. Were I to treat of this Subject in its full Extent, and with all the Accuracy of Method, I might represent to you, under different Heads, Sin, as it is in it self,
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of a poisonous and destructive Nature; consider the various Steps and Degrees of Death, whereby Sin advances in the Soul, and the many Ways whereby it stupifies and kills the several Faculties thereof; and then, in the *last* Place, I might enlarge upon the second Death, which is the Wages of Sin, and the eternal Destruction which shall take hold of Transgressors: But, that I may save your Time as much as I can, I shall only, without a laborious distinguishing of these several Purposes, lay before you a few Considerations upon this Subject in general, which, when enlarged by your own serious Meditation, may serve to convince you that Sin is indeed the great Plague of the Soul, and that every Transgressor is truly dying in his Iniquity.

In the *first* Place, Sin removes us far from God, and separates us from our Maker, renders us unfit for any Fellowship with him, and puts a Stop to all Communion and gracious Influences, and thereby it cuts us off from the only Source of Light and Happiness, and from these Well-springs of Salvation, from which an immortal Spirit must draw all its Vigour and Joy, and without them must be poor and empty, miserable and naked; and therefore the Transgressions of the Ungodly as effectually starve the Soul, as the Body is when pinched with the most craving Hunger; and it must as inevitably pine and languish for Want of this divine spiritual Nourishment, as a Man when reduced to the extremest Scarcity of his daily Bread. For it will hold good of all rational Creatures, with respect to God, which our Saviour instructs his Disciples in, with regard to himself, *John* xv. 5, 6. *I am the Vine, ye are the Branches: He that abideth*

in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much Fruit: For without me ye can do nothing: If a Man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a Branch, and is withered. And we have the fatal Influences of Sin represented to us in this View, Jer. ii. 13. My People, says God, have committed Two Evils; they have forsaken me the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no Water.

As all Creatures have a necessary Dependence upon their almighty Maker, in whom alone they move, live, and have their Being; so rational and intelligent Minds stand in a peculiar Relation to him, they are his Offspring. and he alone merits the glorious Title of the Father of Spirits, they were formed after his Image, and, having his Likeness impressed upon them, were made capable of the nearest Alliance, and the perfectest Enjoyment of their great Parent and Original. And therefore all the Faculties and Powers of the Soul were so made, as to have an eternal Dependence on him as their Head, and an inseparable Connection with him as the Source of all their Joys, and the Spring of their Life; upon which account, the least Removal from God deprives the Soul of its necessary Support, gives it less Life and Motion, and renders it in so far unfit for the noble Purposes which it was designed unto; and, if the growing Distance become an intire Separation, and a fixed Enmity to him, the languishing Spirit must as certainly waste away and die, as a Branch withereth when lopped off from the Tree, whence it derived all its Sap and Nourishment.

The Life of a Soul consists evidently in a regular and vigorous Exercise of all its Faculties, a free Use of its several Powers, and the full

Enjoyment of a Good suitable for it : Now the blessed God, the original Good, and the Fountain of Being and Excellency, is both the great Object about which a Spirit, when healthful and lively, is conversant, and the moving Cause which animates and quickens it, and the eternal Sun by whose Beams it is comforted, warmed and cherished. What is it for a Soul to live, but to know, to desire, and to enjoy, in a Measure proportioned to its Capacity, and worthy of its Nature ? Now, where can all our Faculties be supplied and satisfied, but in God ? He is the pure Source of celestial Light, who alone can make the Eye of Reason and of Faith quick and peircing, and, being all eternal Truth and Righteousness, can possess the Understanding with the most excellent Knowledge, and entertain the wondring Mind with the noblest Discoveries. It is his enlightning Presence which scatters away all these Mists, and Clouds, and false Appearances, which are, in so far as they prevail, the Sickness of the Understanding, and a Disease in the Eye of the Soul, which gradually tends to the utter Loss thereof : Beside that it is the Views of God himself, of the glorious Honours of his Name, the sovereign Beauty of his Nature, and the admirable Wisdom and harmonious Contrivance of all his Works, which are the only proper and delightful Entertainment for an intelligent Mind. So that whenever we wander away from God by our Iniquities, the Understanding, that noblest Quality of a Spirit, languishes and decays, and Ignorance and Error take place, it enters into the Kingdom of Darkness, and immediately is bewildered amidst Doubts, Uncertainties and Mistakes ; and the farther

ther it departs from God, the blinder it grows, and the Scales become thicker.

And as it is in God only that the Eye can be satisfied with seeing; so from the Rivers of his Pleasures alone, can the hungry and thirsty Soul be filled with Blessings. Enjoyment is indeed the principal Part of Life, without which nothing merits that Name; and, so far as we are incapable of Contentment, and cannot find Rest to our Souls, we may be said truly rather to die than to live: Now, the inexhaustible Fulness and Blessedness of the divine Nature, is the only Refuge and Treasure of Souls, in which their most extensive Wishes can meet with perfect Satisfaction, and their Desires be possessed by Joy and Complacency; *in thy Presence, says David, Psa. xvi. 11. is Fulness of Joy, at thy right Hand are Pleasures for evermore; upon which account the Way to his Presence, is in the same Verse represented as the Path of Life: And God is very elegantly held forth as the only Source both of our Knowledge and our Satisfaction, and, for this Reason, as the sole Spring of our Life, without Communications from which we will be continually dying, Psal. xxxvi. 7, 8, 9. How excellent is thy Loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the Children of Men put their Trust under the Shadow of thy Wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the Fatness of thy House: And thou shalt make them drink of the River of thy Pleasures: For with thee is the Fountain of Life; in thy Light shall we see Light.*

So that you see, while an intelligent Creature is by his Iniquities separated from the Father of Spirits, he must needs wither and consume; nor can he live without that Bread that never perisheth. All the fallacious Entertainments of this Scene of
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Vanity, its fleeting Honours, transitory Pleasures and Riches, which profit not in the Day of Death, are too gross and coarse Food to keep a Soul alive. They can afford no Employment worthy of its exalted Faculties, nor any Delights that are equal to its enlarged Desires: Well, therefore is the Fate of the Prodigal, when he left his Father's House, compared to the *Husks upon which the Swine live*, proper enough Food indeed for the Beasts, but extremely unfit for the Life and Vigour of a Man that hath an immaterial Spirit within him. Think then, Sinner, that there is nothing without God that can keep thy Soul from starving and pining away. Every Thing that the World offers to gratify you, is either deadly Poison which will prey on the Vitals, or, at the best, Dreams and Shadows which may amuse and mock you with fantastical Hopes, but it is to your utter Disappointment, such as was the Case mentioned by the Prophet, *Isa. xxix. 8. It shall be even as when a hungry Man dreameth, and behold, he eateth, but he awaketh, and his Soul is empty: Or as when a thirsty Man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh, but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his Soul hath Appetite; for so all they that are far from God shall perish. They spend their Money for that which is not Bread, and their Labour for that which satisfieth not.*

2dly. As Sin thus cuts off Transgressors from the Fountain of Blessedness, and banishes them from the Favour of their Maker, which is the Life of their Souls: So, if we look into our own Breasts, we may, at first Sight, perceive innumerable fatal Instances hereof, that this cruel Disease every where rages, and our mortal Enemy hath given many Wounds and Bruises to the Soul; so that it
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is intirely weakned and disabled, and hath all the Symptoms of a languishing Decay, which must end in its inevitable Death. You know, that a Man, with regard to his Body, would be thought in a dying Condition, if his native Health and original Constitution were utterly depraved, his Strength impaired, and every Thing with him upon the Decay, and if his shaking Joynts and trembling Hands were unable to support his feeble Carcase, bearing about with it all these Symptoms of Mortality: Just so, when the various Faculties of the Soul languish and faint, when they cease to be animated with the Vigour of an immortal Spirit, lose the Strength and Activity of their primitive State, and are unable to perform their different Offices and Duties, and answer their several Ends and Uses, the Soul ought justly to be pronounced upon the decaying Hand, and on the Way to final Destruction.

Now, have ye not been thus dying, O Sinners, since ever you departed from the Fountain of living Waters? How narrow, for Example, is the Understanding become, confined within the Boundaries of Mortality, and imprisoned in Sense, so as not to see through the Clouds and Mists that surround it? What weak Eye-sight have Men got, just like the Dimness of expiring old Age, unable to look beyond the Grave into the everlasting Ages, and unaccustomed to the Regions of Light, and the eternal Brightness and Serenity which find place there? Ah! how mean and silly is the noblest Faculty of an intelligent Being become, whereby it is allied to the World of Spirits, and elevated above that of Beasts, when the poor doting Sinner daily mistakes shadowy Appearances for the greatest Re-

Realities, grasps at the unsatisfying Vanities of this World as a fit Portion for it, and swallows down all the idle Amusements and Impostures, and the nasty Enjoyments of its outward Senses, as if they were wholsom and substantial, without discerning the concealed Poison, or looking to the Confinnes of the Grave, where all these disguised Nothings drop their Masks, and appear in their native Emptiness and Deformity? And then, how mightily hath this spiritual Death encroached upon the Judgment and Reason of Mankind, deprived them of their Firmness and Accuracy, rendered them weak, inconstant and fallacious, unable to choose the Good, and refuse the Evil, running into continued Blunders and Miscarriages in their Conduct, both with regard to this World, and that which is to come; so that, in every Part thereof, they betray, that *Wisdom dwelleth not with them*. The Result of the deepest Politicks, are much of a Piece with the following, *Their inward Thought, as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. xlix. 11, 12. is that their Houses shall continue for ever, and their Dwelling-places to all Generations; they call their Lands after their own Names. Nevertheless, Man being in Honour, abideth not: He is like the Beasts that perish. This their Way is their Folly.* And then the little Judgment that Sin has left us, hath lost all Power over our Inclinations, and is unable to influence our unruly Wills. The Passions, tho' they be the inferior and brutal Part, have usurped the Dominion; the weak Reason, and stupified Conscience, surrender to the first Assault of a Lust, and any impure Delights, or earthly Vanities prove too strong for them, and lead them captive at their Pleasure, driving the impotent decayed

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Creatures over the Belly of Reason, Honour and Conscience. And have we not all, my Friends, had many woful Experiences, how easily our Judgments are bribed and seduced? how soon a Temptation prevails over us? and with how little Courage and Constancy our Reason and Understanding are able to maintain themselves against any Snare of the Devil, or Allurement of the World? Now do not all these loudly proclaim, that our Souls are pining away, and in a dying Condition, when their immortal Powers are become so weak and infirm, and immaterial Spirits are subject to Sense, and enslaved to temporary Vanities, which, were they in an healthful and lively State, would, with a noble Disdain, trample upon these imperious Lusts, which now are Lords over them, and, unmoved, resist all the impotent Attacks the World or the Devil could make on them.

Besides, and I shall instance in no more of our Faculties, how mean and worthless are our Desires and Projects become? And what a low Flight do these Wings of the Soul, our Affections, now take? They creep along the Earth, and are not able to get out of the Puddle and Mire where Dogs and Swine wallow; so little are they fitted to mount above the Clouds into the Regions of Eternity; *what to eat and drink, and wherewithal to be clothed,* are become the common Inclinations and Business of Brutes and of Sinners, and their sneaking poor Ambition aspires no further, than to dying Nothings, Riches, Pleasures and Honours, which cannot accompany them beyond the Grave.

What, my Friends, is this, think you, to live? And must not such Persons be really dying, when so mortal Symptoms appear? It may indeed be
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acknowledged, that the Bodies of Men are living when their Cares are confined to them ; and I shall not deny, but that the ungodly have an animal and sensitive Life: But then their Spirits are dead, and they have no Soul within them ; for why, their Aim is gratifying of Sense, just the same that the Beasts have, their Wishes and Schemes go no further than the Earth, these of Dogs or Swine are as much extended and equally noble. And, if we consider Things impartially, I fancy we may be soon of Opinion, that many brute Creatures manage their Affairs with as much Dexterity and Success, as the most cunning and prosperous Transgressor, the Birds of the Air build their Nests as much for their Conveniency as the most magnificent Palaces, they breathe with more Freedom, and probably have a truer Relish of sensible Pleasures: And the creeping Ant, that lays up in Summer its Winter Provision, shews as much Wisdom, and seems to entertain as worthy Projects, as they who bend all their ambitious Thoughts to the making an Estate, or raising a Family.

So that you see, Mankind are really *dead in Trespases and Sins*, and all their busy Plots, wise Counsels, and daring Actions, which make such a Bustle and Figure in the World, are nothing but the Result of a brutal animal Life ; for Sin hath stifled and choked these immortal Affections, and holy Passions, and that divine heavenly Ambition which are the Life of the Soul, that Soul, which was once powerful, quick and lively as the Angels, had an Eye fit to contemplate the sovereign Beauty, a Mind calculated for the Love and Enjoyment of the supreme original Good ; had Affections and Passions that were too large and exalted, to be filled

led with any Thing but God himself as their Portion, or to be bounded by any Hopes but those that were like it self, eternal; and therefore, with the utmost Contempt, would have trampled under Foot the gaudy Shows of Mortality, or the luxurious Pleasures which it reckoned meet only for the Creatures which crawled along the Earth, and could rise no higher.

3dly. One principal Ingredient in Life, is true Pleasure and Enjoyment; and therefore a vigorous Health, which is the Perfection of natural Life, is the greatest Comfort upon Earth, and enables us, most of all Things, to taste and relish the Satisfaction thereof: And on this account all these pure and holy Minds, which are united to *the Father of Spirits*, enjoy the noblest Life; because they have the perfect Use of all their Powers and Faculties, every one of them is calculated for Delight, and ever filled with the Rivers of Pleasures which flow from the Throne of God. They alone truly live, who inhabit the Country of Felicity, and, with all the Ardours of an eternal Complacency, find Rest in their Maker; who see his amiable Excellencies in that purest Light, whereof he is the Fountain; who love him with all the amorous Raptures of heavenly Affections; and who feel every Ray of Light, and each Spark of this sacred Fire, carry Joys and Blessings, as inconceivable for their Greatness, as immense for their Eternity.

But, if thus to possess the highest Good with the perfectest Satisfaction, be the Life of a Soul; then it is evident how faint Motions of Life Sin hath left us, when it hath so much blasted our Joys, and poisoned our Comforts. What fearful Disorders hath it raised in the Breasts of Men! insatiable Appetites,

petites, ungovernable Lusts, and rude Passions, which are enemies to our Peace, and indispose us to calm and satisfying Delights; Avarice, Ambition, and Revenge, which imbitter all our Possessions; or the Frothiness and Levity of our Minds which make us rove from one Vanity to another, rolling like the troubled Sea which cannot rest. Besides, there is an universal Disappointment, which all worldly Hopes give to a Man; and great Intermixtures of Want and Imperfection, which adulterate the purest of our Enjoyments, and render the Pleasures and Comforts of our best State on Earth very low and faint, and often interrupted. But the Miseries, Vexations, and Dissatisfactions of Mankind are so very obvious, that I need not expatiate upon this Head, I shall only put you in Mind, that it is Sin which hath robbed us of our Joys, and deprived our Souls of so important a Part of their Life; that it is this bitter Root, which hath poisoned all our Faculties, and brought on such a malignant Gangrene on the Soul.

I might, in the *fourth* Place, shew to you, to what desperate State the Sinner, wounded by his Transgressions, is reduced, from the lethargick Benumbedness and Insensibility of all his Faculties, the most alluring Promises and Advantages, immense as they are eternal, do not in the least affect him: Neither do the most terrible Dangers alarm him, so stupid is he, as to run securely on the Brink of the fearful Precipices which hang over the sulphurous Lake, and to be surrounded by the Flames of an unquenchable Fire without awaking; which, I am sure, are as plain Symptoms of a dying Soul, as Insensibility of Pain, or suffering the Pincers and the Fire without shrinking, is of a breathless Carcase, or, at least,

of an apoplectick Fit. There might be many other Things offered upon this Head, but that I may not encroach upon your Time,

I shall only, in the *fifth* Place, lay before you the small Issue of this fatal Decay, in the utter Destruction of Soul and Body in Hell's Fire, when the second Death shall, without Remedy, possess it self of all their Faculties and Members. You might perhaps imagine at first View, that the Death of the Soul is the Annihilation of it ; but you are quite mistaken, and the Thing is incomparably more terrible. The literal Meaning of Death, you know, does not suppose the Annihilation even of the Body, which still remains and is laid in the Grave ; but consists in the Body's being disjoyned from the Soul, its being changed into a lifeless Carcase, and rendred unmeet for any of its former Services and Operations ; And besides this, there will be a much higher and more awful Notion of a dead Person, after the Souls and Bodies of wicked Men are reunited at the Resurrection, when the Body shall not only be altogether useless to the Soul, and, in that respect, without Life ; but shall be formed into an Engine of the severest Torment, and calculated for nothing but Misery, which will be the second Death. In like manner, an immaterial Spirit truly dies, when all its Faculties and Affections will be rendred utterly incapable, to promote the Happiness thereof, or procure it the least Enjoyment of Good ; that, in stead of this, they will become Sources of Wo, and Instruments of Punishment ; This indeed is Death, infinitely more awful and bigger with Destruction, than the turning a Man into nothing would be. Now this, my Friends, is the fatal Tendency of Sin,
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and the ultimate Import of the Question in my Text,
Why will ye die?

I can but just touch at this dismal Condition of Sinners, in that melancholy Region of Death, where there will not be one Grain of Being, not the least Degree of Existence left to the Soul, but what will be employed to make it miserable, and to increase its Ruins; so that it will be wholly Death, and Destruction in every Faculty will exert its Fury.

The Understanding and Imagination will be then wholly taken up with the Terrors of the mighty God, the irreconcilable Enemy to the damned Soul, with the avenging Curse of the Law, and the endless Torments reserved for the guilty Criminal; and so they shall be all Horror and Consternation, not only because of what they feel, but from the sure Foreknowledge of their eternal Agonies, and the direful Forebodings of those perpetual Storms of divine Wrath, which are to tear the Sinner with the most dreadful Convulsions: And the lively Representations hereof, will be all the doleful Entertainment of their Understanding. And oh! who can imagine what implacable Furies, enraged Vipers, and inconceivable hideous Forms of Amazement and Desolation, a Fancy, just framed for Fear and Terror, will present to the confounded Soul?

The Memory also will be made strong and vigorous; but ah! what dismal Images will it be stored with! What a woful Remembrance, ever fresh and piercing, will it be fitted for, of all the Sins and Follies of Youth and old Age, with all the aggravating Circumstances of his Apostacy, which he would fain wish were buried in deep Oblivion!

The Reason will be then clearer than it is now, and the Conscience vastly more sensible; but oh! for what calamitous Purposes! Why, for nothing but to upbraid the Soul with more cutting Reproaches and cruel Mockings, and to sharpen the Teeth of these fierce Serpents and Vipers that will gnaw upon it to Eternity.

The Eyes of the Mind will then be strengthened, to be the more confounded with its own monstrous Ugliness, and terrified by the rueful Looks of its miserable Associates in Perdition; and that it may clearly perceive all those formidable Spectacles which that Prison is full of. And if it cast up its Eye to Heaven, to behold what Glory and Joy it hath for ever lost, that killing View will be enough to distract the very Soul with the most exquisite Regret.

And in a Word all the Affections will become *Vessels of Wrath*; and the Passions will be enraged into black Despair, and redned into the most confounding shameful Blushes. And, as the amiable Presence of God in Heaven, is the flowing Spring of Life and Joy to all the Inhabitants of *Zion*; so in Hell the Sources of his Wrath are laid open, and there his Looks flame with Vengeance, and his angry Presence scatters about furious Storms of Death and Misery.

This, my Friends, is but a very faint and imperfect Delineation of a dying Soul, which its Sins have murdered. I come now in the

Second Place, to shew a little the great Madness of Sinners thus murdering themselves, and that they can pretend to no Excuse for being so obstinately resolved to die, and your Time being gone I can but touch at a few Meditations.

1. Then,

1. Then, one would think, that were the Thing at all to be defended, the most natural Excuse for letting the Soul pine away in so dangerous a Condition, would be, that it is of no very great Value, and therefore may be hazarded without Difficulty. But think on it, O Sinner, dare thou say that thy Soul is of little Importance to thee, and that 'tis of Indifference what become of it, whether it die or live for ever? Dost thou consider, that by being a Spirit, it is of an infinitely nobler Nature than the Body, and capable both of higher Pleasures and more unsufferable Pains; and that it is a Match fit for having the great God who made it, its faithful Friend, or enraged Adversary? And then, wilt thou cast thine Eye into the endless Ages of the other World, and think of what mighty Concern thy Soul must be to thee, which is to last to Eternity; whereas a few Years lay the Body in the Grave. What an incomparable Loss can a Soul sustain! even that of God himself, and of all the Blessings wherewith he can make a Creature happy! art thou then content to be for ever separated from the Fountain of celestial Joy, never once to taste how good he is, nor to drink of the Rivers of his Pleasures? Or, if thou be so basely degenerate as to have no Desire of the angelical Life, yet think if thou can with as much Insensibility venture upon Destruction, knowest thou then the smarting Torment of a wounded Spirit, and the Rorings of an awakned Conscience? Perhaps you have been frightned with the Horrors of temporal Death, and the wild and staring Looks of an expiring Sinner: But ah! how incomparably more astonishing are the Pangs of a dying Soul! with what amazing Throws and Agonies does approach-

ing Destruction shake it! and who can tell its State, when agitated by Despair, and seized by the impitiable Destroyer?

2dly. Can you say, that tho' you own your Souls to be of considerable Value, that yet you get a sufficient Equivalent for them in the Paths of Wickedness? I know that many sell their Souls, but alas! they make an incomparably more sottish Bargain, than that of *Esau* when he sold his Birth-right for a Mess of Pottage: What, my Friends, are a few Years Enjoyment of brutish Pleasures, or a little Amusements with the Gayeties and Honours of this World, a Recompence for the Loss of God and of Heaven? Is the pleasing Flattery of Men like thy self, a wise Reason for provoking the Fury of thy Creator? Will the Gain of Fraud and Iniquity make up the biting Reproaches of an enraged Conscience? Or can the Mirth and Jollity of a vain thoughtless Life, be laid in the Balance with the Terrors of everlasting Death, and the tormenting Shame of an endless Confusion? In a Word, can Time in any respect come in Competition with Eternity? What infinite Trifles then are all the Temptations, which hire Men to murder their immortal Spirits? Mind, my Friends, our Saviour's Question, *Matth. xvi. 26. What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?* So that it may be said of every Sinner, what God speaks to *Israel, Isa. lii. 3. Ye have sold your selves for nought.*

3dly. You can as little alledge, to justify your selves, that you were ignorant of the killing Poison of Sin, and knew not that you were languishing and pining away in your Iniquities: For every Man,

Man, with the least Reflexion, may perceive how weak diseased a Creature he hath become; and to what a miserable State of Poverty and Ruin Sin hath reduced the Soul. How low are our Desires, and base our Pursuits, our Passions fierce, and Lusts ungovernable; and our Reason and Understanding enslaved to their imperious Dictates, which so often drag us over the Belly of our Conscience, and extinguish any Remains of Light? Besides, we are warned by God, in the most moving and affectionate manner, of our Danger: It is loudly proclaimed to us in the holy Scriptures, that *Iniquity will be our Ruin*, that *we shall die in our Sins*, and that the Destruction which shall then overtake us, is both of an inconceivable Greatness and an eternal Continuance: We are guarded against the sweet Allurements and gilded Outside of this poisonous Charmer; and instructed that Death is mixed with its purest Joys, that the least Touch of it is infectious, and that those who would escape the devouring Plague, must flee far from the Habitations of Wickedness, and *abstain from every Appearance of evil*.

4thly. You can as little alledge, in answer to my Text, *Why will ye die?* that your Disease is irrecoverable, and your Case desperate. Sin is indeed the most mortal Plague; but then, it is a Transgressor's voluntary Obstinacy that destroys him, and every Sinner that dies is guilty of the wilful Murder of his Soul: For God hath, you know, provided a blessed Remedy, which is infinitely sufficient for the most deplorable Condition, *Hos. xiii. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self, but in me is thine Help.* and *xiv. 1, 4. Return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine Iniquity. I will heal their Back-*

sliding, I will love them freely: For mine Ager is turned away from him. Since, indeed, you departed from the Fountain of Life and Joy, your Souls have been quite starved, and their Vigour mightily impaired; but why should you now feed upon the Husks, or languish for extreme Poverty: O, forsake the Entertainment of Dogs and Swine, and return to your Father's House, where there is an endless Plenty of Blessings, which shall soon restore your Souls again. Only go no more to broken Cisterns, nor make Lies your Refuge; but comply with the merciful Call, *Isa. lv. 1, 2. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters; and he that hath no Money, come ye, buy and eat: Yea, come, buy Wine and Milk without Money, and without Price. Wherefore do ye spend Money for that which is not Bread? and your Labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight it self in Fatness.* And then, what a glorious lovely Change will be made on a deformed and languishing Soul, which shall soon renew its Youth, and mount up with Wings as the Eagle: When, as it is *Hos. xiv. 5. God will be as the Dew unto Israel, he shall grow as the Lily, and cast forth his Roots as Lebanon.*

Awake then, Sinner, from the Sleep of Death, do not abandon thy melancholy Thoughts to black Despair. Though this wasting Consumption hath made great Advances in thy Soul, and thou find thy self faint and impotent; yet with the Lord there is Strength and Salvation. It is the Glory of a Redeemer to heal diseased Souls, and to revive and quicken them even when they are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*: And, when united to him by true Faith, and taught to draw living Waters from the Well -

Well-springs of Salvation which are in him, thou mayst again be beautified with the Ornaments of Innocence, and restored to the Favour and Presence of God, thy Life and Joy, and made strong in the Lord. Thy Lusts shall be subdued, thy Affections become pure and exalted, and thy Aims noble and heavenly, and the angelical Life will again animate the immortal Spirit within thee. This makes it impossible to offer any Excuse for a dying Soul, in Answer to God's Question, *Jerem. viii. 22. Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there? Why then is not the Health of the Daughter of my People recovered?* Beside all which, the Guilt and Wages of Sin are fully done away; so that, in this respect, the Sinner needs not die in his Iniquities: For our great high Priest, by his eternal Sacrifice hath abolished Death, and paid the uttermost Farthing of our Debt; and therefore it will be infinitely aggravated in us, if we murder our Souls after the joyful Declaration made by our Saviour, *Hos. xiii. 14. I will ransom them from the Power of the Grave, I will redeem them from Death; O Death, I will be thy Plagues, O Grave, I will be thy Destruction.*

In the *fifth* Place, thou canst not alledge, that though this great Physician is able and skilful enough, yet he is unwilling to undertake thy Cure. Why? he is the most compassionate Physician, his Bowels move with Pity whenever he sees a dying Soul, and it is his greatest Pleasure to heal them: He only desires that they would be willing and suffer themselves to be cured, and with infinite Regret he laments their Obstinacy, that they will not come to him that they may have Life, and then God is Love it self, he ever takes Delight to receive a repenting Sinner, and to shed abroad the
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Influences of his Grace whereby he might be strengthened and confirmed; nor gives he ever up with a Transgressor till there be no Remedy, but as he hath sent his only begotten Son into the World to seek and save that which was lost, so he makes the sincerest and tenderest Offers of him, and the Blessings of his Purchase to Mankind, and endures them with much Long-suffering, being willing that none should perish, but that all Men should come to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, and indeed this is the direct Consideration which God proposes in the Text, to add Force to the Question, and shew the Folly of their dying, and to take off the Excuse which it seems they were readiest to make for their Conduct as appears more fully from the parallel Place in this same Prophet, *Exek. xxxiii. 16. Therefore, O thou Son of Man, speak unto the House of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our Transgressions and our Sins be upon us, and we pine away in them; how should we then live? There you see the Plea they make, and now follows God's Return, Ver. 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his Way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?*



S E R-

SERMON III.

ROM. vii. 13. *That Sin by the Commandment might become exceeding sinful.*



WHEN, in this Place, we have so near a Prospect of celebrating the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and pretend to employ this Day in serious Endeavours, that our Souls may be worked up to a Temper and Frame becoming that divine Ordinance, it will be a very proper Employment of our Thoughts, to meditate a little upon the abominable Nature, the monstrous Deformities, and the fatal Poison and Guilt of Sin; that so, being deeply impressed by a humbling Sense of our Baseness and Vileness, we may, when at the Lord's Table, with the more lively Gratitude and affecting Devotion, take a View of that admirable Love, which exalts it self so gloriously

ously in a Redeemer's Sufferings for such abandoned Wretches ; that, being prickt at the Heart by awakened Convictions of our lothsom Disease and noisom Sores, we may, with the more eager Desires and vigorous Faith, flee to him, *who blesses his People in turning them from their Iniquities, and healing their Souls* ; and that, feeling something of that infinite Load of Guilt, and the fearful Condemnation which our Transgressions have exposed us to, we may have the clearer and steadier Prospect of the Value of a Saviour's Death, whereby we are *delivered from the Wrath that is to come* ; and, throwing away the smallest Degree of vain Confidence in our selves, may place all our Hope and Trust in that *one Sacrifice which finished Transgression, made an End of Sin*, and brought in an everlasting Righteousness ; and thus may we, with the greatest Warmth of our Affections, and all the Powers of our Will, accept of *so great a Salvation*.

That I may give such a View of Sin, as may prepare us for a suitable Exercise of these Graces, I have made Choice to discourse a little upon that Character which the Apostle here gives of it, that it is *exceeding sinful* ; And, that I may save as much of your Time as may be, I shall spend no more of it upon that important and difficult Reasoning of the Apostle which preceeds it, than what may be necessary to give some Notion of the Dependence that my Text hath upon it ; and therefore I shall not at all examine the different Opinions of learned Men about the Context.

The holy Apostle, in Prosecution of the great Design of this Epistle, the exalting the Glory of divine Grace published in the Gospel, and establishing the Righteousness of Christ as the only Founda-

dation of our Justification before God, and Acceptance with him, does, in this and the preceeding *Chapter*, expose the vain and foolish Notions of the *Jews*, who not only adhered to the Law of *Moses* as a Rule to govern their Lives, but gloried in that Dispensation, as sufficient for all the Purposes of God's Goodness and their Salvation; and were so mistaken, as to fancy that the Law of it self, without any Regard to, or Assistance from the better Reformation of Things, was a plentiful enough Spring of Life and Salvation; which Dreams having bewitched them, they remained secure in their Dependence upon the Law, without a further Prospect. That the Apostle might expose so dangerous Errors, he observes, that it was not only destitute of Strength and Power to enable apostate Sinners to comply with its Terms; nor was animated by that Spirit and Life which can conquer raging Lusts, restrain and mortify strong Corruptions, and engage Men to be holy and good; but that, on the contrary, Sin used it as a Means to spread its accursed Empire, and make its fatal Government take deeper Root in our Minds; for, says he, *Verse 11. Sin taking Occasion by the Commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* That cunning Deceiver imployed the Law of *Moses* it self as an Engine to work up its Projects. It made Sinners spurn at its infinite Purity, and despair at the Sight of its absolute and extensive Perfection; moved them to murmur at the Strictness of its Precepts, and the Severity of that Punishment which it exposed to: And then, by the Aw of the Law-giver's Greatness, and the Terrors of their own Guilt, which it frightened them with, it drove them further from God, and smothered the affectionate

tionate Sentiments, and the filial Duty owing to a Father. And thus the Law, if separated from and exposed to the Grace of the Gospel, in stead of quickning and saving Sinners, would add Force and Power to Transgression, and become indeed a *killing Letter*.

The Apostle, having observed this, proposes a considerable Difficulty, which seemed to load this Doctrine, *namely*, that the *holy, just and good Law of God* would thereby become the Fountain of Sin and Iniquity, which blemished its Purity, and appeared inconsistent with the Glory of the Law-giver: Now this Objection is removed in the *Verse* that I have read, by two Considerations.

First. That all the mischievous Effects, which some might apprehend he charged the Law with, were intirely owing to the cunning Perverseness of Sin, and the Corruptions of Men which were so easily inflamed by the smallest Spark of Temptation: And that, while the Commands of God were not at all the Cause, but the innocent Occasion of these Evils, that perfect Law lost nothing of its Beauty and Lustre; nor could these fatal Consequences, which flowed from its being so grossly perverted, quite contrary to the native Tendency of it, be with more Justice imputed to this holy Law, than the wholsomest Nourishment can be accounted poisonous, because it feeds the venomous Serpent. This seems to be the Intent of what the Apostle says, that *Sin wrought Death in him by that which was good*.

But *2dly*. The Honour of the divine Precepts, and the Glory of God's Administration in permitting Sin to abuse his Law to so unworthy Purposes, was nobly vindicated from the Issue of that very
artful

artful Snare of Sin, with respect to those in whom God would fulfil the good Pleasure of his Goodness, namely, that by this perverting of the Commandment, Sin might become to them exceeding sinful, that its poisonous Nature might appear the more fatally contagious, its Deformities become more loathsome, and the Soul might be more thoroughly sensible how big this fearful Monster was with Destruction and Death; when the best and purest Things, the very Law of God it self, was turned by it into an Instrument of Death, and made use of to spread its Infection. Thus you see the Connection and Dependence of the Words.

But my Design at this Time is, abstracting from the Context, to consider a little these two Things which we have in the Text. 1. We have a very extraordinary Character given of Sin by the Apostle, *that it is exceeding sinful*: And indeed this seems to be the most sublime and emphatical Expression, that could well be imagined, of the inconceivable Evil of that abominable Thing which God's Soul abhorreth. The Scriptures, to give a just Notion hereof, paint Iniquity in the most odious and fearful Colours, and represent it to our Thoughts, by comparing it to such Objects as Men have the utmost Aversion and Contempt of; for it is called *the Vomit of the Dog*, and *the Mire in which the Sow wallows*, *Blindness* and *Weakness*, and *Death* it self; 'tis held forth as covered over with all the noisome pestilential Sores of the most hateful and stinking Plague; in a Word, it is said to be *the Folly and Madness*, *the Shame* and *the Disease of a Soul*; But, because all these fall short of its more loathsome Vileness, the Apostle goes to it self, which alone could afford a horrible enough Image of this Monster,

ster, *it is exceeding sinful*, says he; whereby the Apostle, with the utmost Force and Elegancy, informs us, that search all the Universe, descend to the Lowness and Baseness of Hell it self, there was no Similitude that could bear any Proportion to the Abomination of Sin; and that the infinitely worst Thing could be possibly said of it, was, that it is like it self, *sinful*: So that the Question put by God with respect to his excellent Greatness, may be asked in relation to the infinite Vileness of Sin, *Isa. xlv. 5. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?* 2dly. In the Text, we have a very useful Mean to beget in Men a suitable Apprehension of this monstrous Nature of Sin, *namely*, a serious Consideration of the holy Law of God, and an attentive comparing Sin with it: *That Sin*, saith the Apostle, *by the Commandment might become exceeding sinful*. From which Subject, I shall at this Occasion, through the divine Assistance, endeavour to discourse a little on these two Things.

1. I shall, from several Considerations, shew the infinitely vile and evil Nature of Sin. That nothing is so abominable as to be a sufficient Representation of its Baseness, that its monstrous Deformities exceed every Comparison; so that to hold forth its incomprehensible Hatredness, we must recur to it self, and say, *Sin is exceeding sinful*.

2dly. I shall shew, if Time allow, how the Law contributes to prove this, and manifest the amazing Ugliness and Evil of Sin.

As to the *first* of these, It is not possible for me to expose to your Views the Poison, and Madness, and Shame of Sin in all their endless Variety: This might easily be subdivided into many Heads,
and

and afford a Subject for several Discourses; I shall therefore mention only some few Things, that may give us a little Notion hereof, and raise our Horror and Aversion at that abominable Thing, and, as I go alongst, I shall intermix practical Reflexions.

1. Then it will appear that Sin is exceeding, infinitely sinful, if we consider that it is the greatest Unlikeness, and the directest Contradiction to the most glorious and perfect Excellencies of the divine Nature; and therefore Sin must be as base and filthy, as the Light and Purity wherewith God is clothed are exalted and illustrious.

Every Attribute of our almighty King shews how great he is, how worthy of the highest Worship and the solemnest Aw: His boundless Power, and unerring Wisdom, and eternal Dominion, are all of them mighty Objects of our Wonder and Praise; but, as if these were inconsiderable Honours, Holiness is the delightful Attribute, which hath the highest Value stampt upon it by that God who is *glorious in the Beauties of his Holiness*. It is the brightest Evidence how much his Perfections are superior to created Beings, that *there is none holy as the Lord*: And therefore the pure angelical Beings, who are ever animated and directed by the Beams of that divine Light which surrounds them, and have so much nearer Access to their Maker, when with the warmest Devotion and the loudest Songs celebrating his Praises, they make the Temple above resound, *Ho'y, holy, holy, is the Lord; the whole Earth is full of thy Glory*; for they behold him then clothed with the most exalted Honour and Majesty, when *he sits upon the Throne of his Holiness*. All his Ways and Works are beautified with the Lustre

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of Holiness, his whole Counsels and Providences tend to honour it ; the divine Purity gives a sparkling Loveliness to all his other Perfections, shews them in a more amiable Light, and is that which chiefly ought to enliven our Adorations : And therefore it is very remarkable, that the Psalmist mentions this as the very Reason why we should praise his Power and Greatness, *Psal. xcix. 2, 3. The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all People ; let them praise thy great and terrible Name, for it is holy.*

Now Sin, which is in its Nature a direct Contrariety to this noblest of the divine Perfections, must on that account be infinitely *sinful* : And for every glorious Thing that can be spoken of this *holy Name*, some shameful hateful Abomination must be found in this terrible Monster, which is all made up and composed of the directest Contradictions to eternal Beauty and the perfectest Excellency ; and what can these be, but Baseness, Vileness, Confusion, Death, all the Ingredients of Sin, as incomprehensibly odious, and as far beyond the worst we can imagine thereof, as the Attributes of our heavenly King are above our Adorations ? Every Ray of Light and Glory in that eternal Sun, which dazzles and delights the Seraphs, hits upon and discovers some new Filthiness and hateful Disease in Sin : O the inconceivable Depths of it ! full every where of venomous infectious Serpents, which are as big with Poison and Death, as that *holy Name* is of the loveliest Glory ; and it is equally the Object of Detestation and Abhorrence, as God is of our affectionate Praises.

The divine Nature is both the Pattern and Fountain of Excellency, and the more unlike any Thing

is to it, it must thereby be more worthless and imperfect. It is true, in every Thing our Natures are infinitely lower than his, our *Strength* is *Weakness* when compared to his *Power*, our *Knowledge* is *Ignorance* when set in the *Brightness* of his *Countenance*, and our *Being* is *nothing* with a relation to his *necessary and eternal Existence*: But it is remarkable, that tho', in all these, there is no Proportion betwixt the Creator and the Work of his Hands, yet, the little of them they have are not opposed, or contrary to the divine Excellencies, nor hateful in his Sight; whereas Sin is the perfect Reverse, and the direst Contradiction thereto; could it take Place, it would utterly blot out and deface all the Glories of the Deity, it would turn his infinite Power into boundless Rage and furious Anger, and render his unerring Wisdom, only incomprehensible Cunning and Deceit; thus, in every respect, it would make these Perfections, which are so amiable when shining in the *Beauties of Holiness*, frightful with Terrors and Destruction. And, because of this abominable Nature of Sin, it is that filthy Thing which God's Soul hateth, which he spurns away from him with the utmost Contempt, and never looks upon but with infinite Detestation; and well may we say of him as *David* speaks, *Psal. v. 4, 5. For thou art not a God that hath Pleasure in Wickedness, neither shall Evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy Sight, thou hatest all Workers of Iniquity.* So that you see the Abomination of Sin and its Loathsomeness, run in an exactly parallel Contrariety, are directly opposed to the incomprehensible Glories of an infinite God: It must be exceeding sinful, and more stink-

ing than any Sore, filthier than any Plague, and base beyond Comparison.

With what Terrors should that fearful Monster strike us? How should our Indignation be kindled, and the Passions of Hatred and Contempt boyl within us, at the Sight of that abandoned Enemy to Loveliness and Beauty, and very Reverse of eternal Perfections? Ah! how beastly and disgraceful must be the Nature, how poisonous the contagious Breath, how shameful and destructive the Fruit of that accursed Serpent? And oh! what fatal Venom must it spread over a Spirit, when it stings and affects it? and *how much more abominable and filthy is Man, which drinketh in Iniquity like Water?* as *Eliphaz* speaks, *Job xv. 16.* With what Horror and Confusion should thou then, O my Soul, look into thy self, and acknowledge, with the deepest Blushes, that thou hast often embraced that detestable Monster with thy polluted Affections, and hugged it in thy Bosom? Oh! what have I been so long entertaining within my Heart, but a Viper, as ugly and debased as Hell, as incomprehensibly filthy and unclean, as God is infinitely pure and excellent? How blind have I been, to give my Esteem and Affection to these brutish Lusts and Passions, which are the Scandal and Disgrace of a Spirit; and to have harboured within me innumerable venomous Asps and Cockatrices, that have spread their Poison and Filth over all my Faculties, have ate away, with a fearful Gangrene, my Strength and Happiness, have robbed me of all my Beauty and Joy, and filled my Belly with Rotteness and Destruction? and, when become so impure and filthy, how justly, O my Soul, do all the holy Angels flee from thee with Horror, and look

look on thee with Detestation? Thou art made the Scorn of insulting Devils, and were not thou blind and stupid, would soon be a Fearfulness and a Terror to thy self round about. And though, while Sin hath now a false Face on it, hath painted over its hellish Nature with deceitful Colours, and we see no further than the Outside, thou may be pleased with thy Dream: Yet take a Prospect of that awful Hour, when the Glory of infinite Purity, that shall clothe thy Judge, will then so brightly reflect the eternal Shame and Disgrace of Sin, that every Eye of all that general Assembly of Beings shall behold them; when all these base Lusts, these vile and hateful Vermin that have inhabited thy Breast, will come crawling forth, and be set in all their Wretchedness and naked Pollutions in the Brightness of the divine Countenance: With what Confusion and Agony wilt thou then look at this abominable Monster, that now is so foolishly entertained by thee? In a Word, Sin will then appear exceeding sinful, and, how fair soever its Charms and Pleasures now seem to bewitch Men, yet they are all contrary to infinite Amiableness, they are hated by the perfectedest Love, and disapproved and condemned by unerring Wisdom that never fails in Judgment. To conclude, a View of the divine Purity, and a comparing ourselves with it, should make us imitate Job's Improvement of them, which will be a very fit Employment for a Fast-day, Job xlii. 5, 6. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the Ear, but now mine Eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in Dust and Ashes.* And then let us carry alongst with us such Impressions of this poisonous Monster, Sin, as may inflame our Affections, and

inspire our grateful Songs, *to him that loved us and washed us in his Blood,*

I have insisted so long on this Head, that I shall but touch on others that would afford so great a Variety of useful Meditations.

2^{dly}. As Sin is thus directly contrary to the brightest Glory and Excellency, so it is the sole Cause of all the terrible Confusion and Distraction which are to be found in the World, that have quite disordered the System of rational Beings, and broken its Union and Harmony; and, instead of that Peace, and Beauty, and comely Proportion, which adorned the Face of Things before Sin entered into the World, Sin hath filled every Place with Irregularity, Desolation and Disturbance. Before the Birth of this Monster, what a joyful and beautiful Light was spread over the Creation, when Angels and Men were clothed with the Ornaments of Innocence, and, without pretending to usurp God's Place, kept the Station of Creatures, and lived in a dutiful Subordination to their Maker, felt an unbounded Satisfaction in him, the Gladness of their Joy, and solaced themselves with his Love: When a perfect Calm within, shewed a serene Mind and a peaceful Conscience that were never ruffled; and an universal Quiet and Harmony obtained in every Soul, that was joyned, by the firmest Union, to its God, and the Fellow-subjects of this amiable King? but how woful a Change happened? what a Flood of mischievous Plagues, of poisonous Serpents, and devouring Tygers over-run the World, and terribly disordered it at that unhappy Hour, when *Lust conceived and brought forth Sin*? Then, instead of the former lovely Prospect, were to be seen nothing but

but proud rebellious Creatures, divine Order and Government trampled under Foot, Hatred and Contention, raged in Societies, Storms in the Conscience, and Vanity and Vexation in the Life. Ah! how prolifick and fruitful was this Cockatrice Egg? all the envenomed Malice and Fury of Hell, and the Rage of Devils, the fierce Passions and beastly Lusts of ungodly Men, the innumerable Mists of Error which darken their Minds, the cheating deceitful Pleasures, bewitching Inchantments and fatal Snares of a vain Conversation, the Reelings of a changeable World, and the Folly and Madness of Men in it, were all brought forth by this Monster. Sin hath turned Things upside down; and, as it banished Duty and Loyalty to the great Lord of the World, it drove away Peace, and Liberty and Happiness. It was Sin that made rational Creatures flee away from God, the Fountain of their Being and Salvation, and rendred the Views of these Excellencies, which were once our greatest Gladness, our Fear and Dread: Sin kindled the Wrath of him who is *so slow to Anger*, and covered the sweetest and most alluring Perfections with Frowns and Terrors.

And now, for I only can instance in one or two of them, since these Mischiefs and Disorders are numberless in their Variety, and infinite in their Distraction and Abomination, must not the accursed Parent of them all appear *exceeding sinful*? Think upon it, O my Soul, that, by entertaining Sin, thou grasps devouring Coals in thy Bosom, and swallows down Poison and Death; every Draught of its Pleasures carries with it to thy Heart the Seeds of Trouble and Wo, and will be there fully ripened into a plentiful Increase of Hor-

ror, Anguish and Despair: And, as *James* speaks of the Riches of Iniquity, *James* v. 3. *They shall eat your Flesh as it were Fire, ye have heaped Treasure together for the last Days, namely, Treasures of Wrath and Condemnation.* Mad Man! think on it, as the same Apostle insinuates *Ver. 5.* that, tho' Sin may indeed fatten and nourish you, it is against the *Day of Slaughter.*

3dly. Sin, as it is the Cause of these numberless Mischiefs, which wholly ow their Being to it, so its poisonous Breath infects every Circumstance of our Life it reaches; and it is Sin alone which makes any Thing, beside itself, dangerous and destructive: It is Sin which arms all our Enemies, and renders them formidable to our Souls; it is this which puffs up our vain and giddy Fancies in Prosperity, or disquiets us with Fears of a changeable State: Sin is the bitterest Ingredient in Afflictions, which frets us with repining Impatience, and burns us up with Envy and Revenge; it is it which makes us fearful and cowardly, presses down our sinking Courage, and blasts our Confidence. Iniquity is the Cause, that, when surrounded without by Dangers and Snares in an uncertain and beguiling World, we can find no Comfort by looking into our own Breasts, but are frightened by serious Thoughts of ourselves, as the most disagreeable Company, and the severest Upbraiders and Tormenters. And then it is Sin which furnishes that last Enemy, at the pale Looks of which our Nature shrinks back with such Fear and Amazement, with all its formidable Attendants: Death, so frightful to Mortals, gets all the Terrors, wherewith it appears surrounded, out of the fatal Treasures of Sin: It is this that wraps up
Death

Death in Darkness and Melancholy, that clothes it with gloomy Fears and Uncertainties; and raises up the doleful Train of Sorrows and Anxieties, and distracted Thoughts within the departing Soul: Sin is the Sting of Death which wounds the Spirit, and makes it tremble at the Approaches of another World, and shake at the awful Views of Eternity; and, if Sin did not poison and defile it, a Death-bed would be the easiest happiest Resting-place, and would be surrounded by no Clouds or Horrors to frighten, but be sweeter and calmer to the feeble decayed Carcase, than the softest Down is to the most effeminate Person in the Vigour of Health; every Thing then in our Life or Death, that we complain or are afraid of, is wholly owing to Sin, and prove it to be *exceeding sinful*.

4^{thly}. Sin will appear to be infinitely evil, if we consider how it overturns and dissolves the most important and best established Relations, that Things ought to bear to one another, and makes Men act and think intirely contrary to them. You'll easily be perswaded, for Example, that there is an eternal unalterable Relation betwixt a Creator and his Creatures, betwixt a bountiful Benefactor, and those who are daily crowned with his Goodness, betwixt a compassionate Saviour and such as are redeemed by him from an eternal Grave: And, as the Duties resulting herefrom are of the most sacred Obligation, and the Ties with which they bind us, have really all the infinite Force of eternal Righteousness, it is plain that Sin, which cuts them through and disturbs them, must be infinitely sinful. And now, what a horrid Scene opens to our View? what monstrous Disorders,

ders, and amazing Extravagancies and Contradictions, offer themselves to make good the Apostle's Character of Impiety? Sin makes the Children of the tenderest Father, not of their Bodies only, but of the nobler Part, the Soul, instead of filial Love and Obedience, treat him with Averſation and perfidious Ingratitude: It ſpurns at the Love of a Redeemer, and tramples under Foot the Compaſſions of a Saviour; it makes infinitely amiable Perfections leſs beloved and purſued, than a diſguiſed Show, or an empty Dream, yea, than vile polluted diſgraceful Vanities; and hath rendred irrefiſtible Power, omnipotent Vengeance, to be leſs feared than the Weakneſs and impotent Boaſts of dying Mortals, or Devils bound up in everlaſting Chains. Hence eternal Reason, and undisputed Authority, and great Faithfulneſs, and the kindeſt and moſt affectionate Reproofs and Admonitions, are become of leſs Efficacy in perſwading and governing reaſonable Creatures, than the groſſeſt Deceits and treacherous Snares, and uſurped Dominion of the cruelleſt Tyrant and the moſt implacable Enemy. In a Word, it hath made the Creature, and that of the worſt and filthieſt Kind, more feared, and loved, and worſhipped, than the *Creator God bleſſed for ever.*

And how often, O my Soul, haſt thou been ſo bewitched, by the Inchantments of this helliſh Charmer, to ſuch a monſtrous Extravagance of Madneſs and Wickedneſs, as to forget God that made thee, thy dear Lord who wept over thy perishing Soul, and died to ſave thee while thou beſtowed thy polluted Affections upon baſe Luſts and Corruptions, which warred againſt thy Life and Happineſs? how many a Time was thy hard
Heart

Heart not in the least touched by the Tears and Blood of a Saviour, whose Love became so illustrious by the infinite Excellency of his Nature above us, and ought to have been pressed in on thy Affections, with an irresistible Force, by the Worthlessness, Vileness, and Enmity of Transgressors, the Object thereof? How oft, my Soul, hath this false impure Deceiver cheated me with vain Appearances of Good, made me fond of fading Pleasures, airy Honours and unsatisfying Riches, while I was all the while blind to my true Interests, and had lost my Relish for substantial Realities.

And then, which, had your Time allowed, I designed to have insisted on at large as a distinct Head: Sin hath so far overturned the very Nature and Constitution of Things, as to make an immortal Spirit prostitute its Glory, and Beauty, and Strength, to the Pursuit of perishing Vanities, which, in a few Years, it must leave, while it is altogether unmindful of those Blessings which are large as its Wishes, and as lasting as it self; and grasps at disguised Nothings, over the Belly of its Honour, Conscience, and its temporal and even everlasting Interests. Sin exalts Time beyond Eternity, raises sensual Pleasures to tyrannize over Reason, and makes the noblest Faculties of the Mind Slaves to the dying Members of the Body. In a Word, Sin so amazingly stupifies the Soul, as to make it forget its heavenly Original, the Nobleness of its Birth, and the glorious Things it is designed for; so that a Being, capable of enjoying God for its Light and Salvation, and all the ravishing Joys which an endless Heaven comprehends,

becomes so monstrously degenerate, as to devote it self to the Employment of Dogs and Swine, the Delights of a present World. And, as these Things are so surprizingly vain, foolish and disgraceful, Sin, which is the Cause of them, must be *exceeding sinful*.

5thly. I might at large discourse on the affecting View of the incomprehensible Evil of Sin, as appearing from the great Things that were necessary to abolish it ; and this is the peculiar Argument held forth to us in the Lord's Supper : But I shall only observe, that the Stain of Sin was so deep, and its Poison so peircing, that nothing but the Blood of God could wash it away ; its Contrariety to the divine Nature, its Guilt and Curse were so hainous, that the Sacrifice of his own Son was necessary to expiate the mighty Offence ; nor had the whole angelical Creation so much of Purity and Worth, as Sin contained of Lothfomness and Abomination. And then its Poison was so infectious, that the Wisdom and Grace of a Redeemer were required to free and preserve Men from the Contagion. Nothing short of infinite Love and boundless Compassion, could have looked with Pity upon so ugly a Spectacle ; nor was any Thing but that mighty Power, which works in them that believe, able to deliver from its Tyranny, conquer and subdue it. And then

6thly. Which is directly intended in the Text, Sin is so *exceeding sinful*, that it perverts the best and holiest Things to its abominable Purposes. The Goodness of God, which should lead to *Repentance*, is made an Encouragement to flee farther from him ; his Forbearance is an Engine to work Men to a
more

exceeding sinful.

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more stupid Security in doing Evil ; and his not executing Justice speedily, an Argument to harden them in the profane Belief, that there is no God to judge the World in Righteousness ; his Grace is turned to Wantonness and Lasciviousness. You see, the Apostle tells us, that *Sin by the Commandment it self took Occasion to deceive him.*



S E R-



S E R M O N IV.

PSALM CXXX. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldst
mark Iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?*



THE Words which I have now read, afford a Subject of Meditation so evidently suitable to the Work of this Day, and have so native a Tendency to prepare us for the Employment of the approaching Feast of the Lord, *the fleeing for Refuge to lay hold upon the Hope set before us*, and the giving Glory to that Forgiveness, which is with God through Jesus Christ, that he may be feared and obeyed; that it will be needless to spend your Time by any further Introduction.

The Text presents to our Thoughts an awful Reflexion, that naturally occurred to a Soul which was awakned into a Sense of the infinite Holiness and

and Justice of God, and of the incomparable Vileness and destructive Nature of Sin; and which was plunged into great Depths of Perplexity and Horror because of its own Iniquities, the Guilt whereof stared it in the Face, and smote it to the very Heart: *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark Iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?*

Here you see plainly we have two Things.

1. We have a Supposition put, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark Iniquities.* This Phrase may have an Allusion, either to a severe Judge, who critically notices all the Crimes chargeable upon an Offender with their whole Aggravations, and without an Indemnity for one of them, or the smallest Mitigation of the Law; who proceeds to an impartial Trial, and gives Justice its whole Force against the Guilty: Or it may be referred to a Creditor, that accurately marks down every particular Article in his Account, without forgetting or cancelling one of them, without making any Abatements or Composition, but lays his Claim to the full Extent of the Law, and gives down no Part of the same; dealing with his Debtor as the Servant did with his Fellow, *Mat. xviii. 28. Who laid Hands on him, and took him by the Throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest: And would have no Patience, but went, and cast him into Prison till he should pay the Debt.* Now, in Allusion to these, God's marking Iniquity, which is placed in Opposition to his pardoning Sin, blotting it out or hiding it from him, signifies his assuming the Character of an inexorable Judge, and of a rigid Creditor, who forgives none of the Debts owing to him, nor remits any Part of the Punishment which his holy Law exposes the Criminal unto; but reserves every Iniquity of the Transgressor unto

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unto Vengeance, and, according to the Severity of impartial Justice and spotless Purity, renders unto every Man according to his Works, without the Interposition of a Mediator, and Forgiveness through him.

Now, if God should deal in this manner with Mankind, says the Psalmist, *who shall stand?* By *standing here*, you'll easily perceive is meant, a Person's being able to come to a Reckoning and to balance his Accounts; his being in a Capacity to abide his Trial, and, instead of pleading guilty, and submitting himself to Mercy, to refer himself unto the Law, and appear with Confidence and Courage before his Judge, from an Assurance of his Innocence, and Expectation of Acquittance: In Opposition to which, it is said, *Psal. i. 5. That the ungodly shall not stand in Judgment, nor Sinners in the Congregation of the Righteous.*

I need scarce put you in mind of what you hear so frequently, that Questions of this kind, are so far from insinuating any Doubt about the Matter in hand, that, on the contrary, according to the different Circumstances of Places, they add great Strength either to the Affirmation or Denial of a Thing; so that the plain Meaning of the Psalmist is, that, if the Lord would mark Iniquity, no Man should stand: There would not be one Person that could account for one of many Thousands, or be able to abide so severe a Trial; but the wisest, and holiest, and best of all the Sons of *Adam*, would be found wanting when thus weighed in the Balance, their Confidence would utterly fall, and their own Consciences would condemn them, nor could they make any Defence against the Guilt

charged

charged upon them, or plead why the Sentence should not be executed.

So that this is the Import of our Text, O Lord, thou great and terrible God, if thou shouldst make a strict Enquiry into the Lives of Mankind, and mark down all their Offences; if thou clothe thy self with Justice, and, being armed with Vengeance, should bring Sinners to the Bar, and deal with them as thou mightst in Righteousness, according to the Severity of thy holy Law: The Horror of an universal Guilt would seize upon every Soul; not one would be able to plead his Cause before thee, and to answer the Accusations brought against him, nor to find any Cloke for his Sins, or Method to escape Punishment; but every Mouth will be stopped, all the World shall become guilty before thee, and when thou entrest into Judgment with thy Servant, no Flesh living shall be justified. And the *Psalmist's* here putting the Question, *who shall stand?* argues the steadiest Faith, and the firmest Confidence as to this Truth: He is so assured thereof, that he refers it to every Man's deliberate Thoughts, and dares the whole World to produce any one single Instance of a Man that could balance his Accounts with God, and venture upon standing a Trial; *for how can Man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a Woman?*

In discoursing to you upon this Subject, I shall endeavour, through divine Assistance, to do these Two or Three Things.

1. I shall explain to you at some Length God's marking of Iniquity.

2. I shall shew, that if he should mark Iniquity, no Man would be able to stand.

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3. I shall make some practical Improvement of what may be discoursed.

1. I am to explain and illustrate the Supposition which the Psalmist makes in my Text, and shew what God does when he *marks Iniquity*. And I shall consider the Matter, both as it will be naturally represented to an awaked Sinner, when his Conscience is first roused up into a deep Sense of the Wrath of God, due to him for his Transgressions, and alarmed with a Prospect of his fearful Danger, and aggravated Guilt; and also, as it will be fully accomplished with respect to all ungodly Men, who die out of Christ, when they shall at the great Day of Accounts be brought to their Trial before the impartial Judgment-seat, and God will in the highest Sense *mark their Iniquities*.

1. In *marking of Iniquities*, God appears with all the Terrors of an almighty King, and an inexorable Judge, and clothes himself with all those Perfections which can render him infinitely awful, and strike Fear and Amazement unto those who then have to do with him. He will display that irresistible Power, whereby he is able in a Moment to crush into Pieces the stoutest Rebels, and make the Curse of the Law obtain its full Accomplishment upon the boldest Offender. He'll come forth attended by the mighty Arms of his Angels, these powerful Executioners of his Vengeance, and devouring Flames will then surround that God, *who is a consuming Fire to the Workers of Iniquity*. He will then also sit upon the Throne of his Holiness, and reveal to the astonished Soul the spotless Purity of his Nature, and his inconceivable Abhorrence of all Unrighteousness; so that *Fools cannot possibly stand before him, and he hateth all the Workers of Iniquity*,

quity, yea, the Heavens are not clean in his Sight, and he chargeth all his Angels with Folly. And this holy and zealous God, will, when he marks Iniquity, surround himself with the most piercing Light, whereby he discovers our secret Thoughts before ever they be formed within us; and with the Rays of his omniscient Eye, before which all Things are naked and bare. For, as it is, *Psal. cxxxix. 12. The Darknes hideth not from him, but the Night shineth as the Day; the Darknes and the Light are both alike unto him.*

So that God then will be manifested with the greatest Aw, Pomp and Majesty; and will take to himself all the Characters that become a severe Enquirer, an inexorable Judge, and a powerful Executioner, from whose Knowledge nothing can be concealed, from whose Vengeance no Person can possibly escape, and in the Eyes of whose Justice and Holiness, the least Defect, the smallest Spot of Iniquity, is an irreconcilable Abomination. Thus God will appear, when he searches into the Breach of his Law, as he did at the Promulgation of it upon Mount Sinai, when all the People saw the Thundrings and the Lightnings, and the Noise of the Trumpet, and the Mountain smoking: And, no doubt, this majestick Countenance, and awful Glory of that consuming Fire, with whom Sinners have to do, must mightily affect them with Fear and Amazement, and have the same Influence on them which they had upon Moses, when they made him exceedingly fear and quake; and if they be not perfectly able to justify themselves, so solemn an Appearance cannot miss quite to confound and overwhelm them. But,

2dly. When God marks Iniquity, Compassion and Mercy find no Place; but the Sword of Justice

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strikes without any interposing Hand, avenging Wrath flames in all its Vehemency: The holy Law of God exerts its Curse with an eternal Efficacy, by a loud and unwearied Voice, demands Reparation for the least Affront done it, and for the smallest Thought, Word and Action, that hath not a perfect Conformity to its Precepts in all Things: And the Debtor is dealt with according to the Measures of rigid Justice, that craves full Payment, and cannot abate one Earthing. For these amiable Excellencies of the Father of Mercies, which are the Subject of the joyful Praises and Admiration of Christians, find Place only when God covers Iniquity, and casts our Sins behind his Back, so that they are no more remembred, when he deals with Sinners by the Hands of a Mediator, and makes the Glory of his Perfections shine with an attractive Beauty, in the Face of his Anointed, our Lord and Saviour; then indeed, *there is Forgiveness with him that he may be feared*, then he cancels our Obligation to Punishment, gives a free Acquittance of the Debt, and indemnifies the Criminal: But it is quite otherwise when he marks Iniquity, there is then no Mixture of Compassion, nor any moving of the Bowels of Mercy, Goodness will not make the least Abatement, *and there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries.* So that unrestrained Fury, unrelenting Justice, Jealousy that rages, and can by no Means be quenched, and fierce Wrath against every Soul that doth Evil, reign and triumph in that Day when God *marks Iniquity*; a Rod of Iron comes instead of a Sceptre of Grace, nor does a Throne of Judgment leave any Room for a Mercy-seat.

Thus

Thus God is very movingly represented to us by *Job, Job ix. 30, &c. If I wash my self with Snow-water, and make my Hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the Ditch, and mine own Clothes shall abhor me: For he is not a Man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in Judgment; neither is there any Days-man betwixt us, that might lay his Hand upon us both. Let him take away his Rod from me, and let not his Fear terrify me.* This is the way God deals with a Sinner, when he marks Iniquity.

3dly. When God marks Iniquity, he produces against the guilty Person, and charges home upon him, the whole Sins of his Life, in all their infinite Number, and endless Variety. The strictest Censures, the severest Judges upon Earth, must many Times let some Criminals pass unpunished, and have not a thorough View of all the Failures of a Transgressor, and their Aggravations, when they bring him to a Trial; many Breaches and Evasions of the Law slip unnoticed and undiscovered by them; and cunning Offenders fall upon artful Methods to escape the Hands of Justice, or at least to colour over and alleviate Part of their Guilt: But when God marks Iniquity, there is not the smallest Article that can be overlooked, nor is there the least Thing that may heighten the Account, and aggravate the Charge against a Man, but what will be exactly weighed and laid to his Door, in the full Extent of a Law that is exceeding broad. Every vain Thought, and idle Word, and ungodly, or useless, and unprofitable Action, every *Talent hid in a Napkin*, and each Moment of Time that hath not been improved to Edification, will all be numbred, and increase the Sum of Guilt: For the Books that shall then be opened, are kept with an infinite Ac-

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curacy, and there is not one Farthing, the least Mite of Debt, out of its due Place, and Oh how surprizing will so long and dismal a Libel prove to the guilty Soul! when innumerable Transgressions compass it about, and a Crowd of Evils on all Hands surround it, and send forth loud Accusations, which will grate the Ears of the trembling Pannel with their melancholy Noise. When we make the slightest Reflexion on our bypast Lives, our own Consciences cannot but condemn us: But, as it is *I. John iii. 20. God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things,* and so the Charge which he shall bring against us, will be infinitely heavier than we now dream of, and will contain innumerable Particulars which we never reflect upon.

We are ready to overlook the far greatest Part of our Follies and Errors, some of them we never take notice of, but vain Thoughts, and idle Words, are continually proceeding from our Hearts and Mouths, almost without our being conscious thereof; others of them are soon forgotten by us, and the Impression of our Guilt is gradually effaced, so that, were we to recount our Transgressions, it is but a very small Part of them, in Comparison, that would occur to us: But with God it is quite otherwise, and when he marks Iniquities, the Account is stated with an infallible Exactness and Severity, *his Eyes are upon the Ways of Men, and he pondereth all their Goings;* and as *every Thing is naked and open before him,* so all the Transactions of human Life, our whole Projects, Desires, Endeavours, Business, and Pleasures, are recorded in his Book, and will be found written in legible Characters there, when, as it is *Eccl. xii. 14. God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good,*

or

or whether it be evil; and when, as it is *Matth. xii. 36.* For every idle Word that Men shall speak, they shall give Account in the Day of Judgment.

And when God produces this fearful Charge against the confounded Sinner, he will quicken his Memory, make it strong and lively, and set before him, in a clear View, all the Vanities of his Youth and Wickednesses of his old Age, which he had quite buried in deep Oblivion upon Earth, and was apt to imagine that God had done so too; and will give him the irresistible Impressions of numberless Defects and Failures in all the Parts of his Duty, which he never so much as once thought of before: The whole of which he will convict the Sinner of, by the Testimony of his own Conscience, and all the other Circumstances of his Life, which will be to God instead of a Thousand Witnesses. This Part of the divine Procedure, when he marks Iniquity, is very emphatically represented to us by *Job, Job x. 14, 17.* *If I Sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine Iniquity. Thou renewest thy Witnesses against me, and increasest thy Indignation upon me.*

4thly. When God marks Iniquities, he will also carefully set down all the various Qualities and Conditions of these Articles, which he brings in Charge against the Sinner; for these contribute mightily to the just stating of Accounts, and are of great Importance. Now, there is no Circumstance so small, if it can any ways conduce to aggravate the Accusation, but what will be weighed in the Balances of Righteousness: He will measure, with a critical Exactness, the different Degrees of Contempt and Hatred that have animated the Rebellion of Transgressors, and envenomed their Back-

slidings, as that Pleasure with which Men delighted in working Iniquity, and Aversion wherewith they departed from the Ways of Holiness; as also, all the different Mixtures of Folly and Levity which were found in their Conversation, or of Laziness, Formality and Insincerity which allayed their best Performances, and rendred their very Sacrifices unacceptable. And, as he will thus examine to what Heights of Unbelief, Impiety and Carnality, the several Transgressions of Mankind have arisen; so he will bring into Account all the Talents that have been misimproven, and the Means of Grace that were slighted and abused. He will then, my Friends, without overlooking the smallest of them, lay to our Charge the whole Advantages of a pious Education, that we have severally enjoyed; the Instructions, Intreaties and Examples of religious Parents, or godly Ministers; the Prayers they put up for us; the affectionate Admonitions they gave us, to *remember our Creator*, and provide for our Souls; the tender Checks they afforded to the Beginnings of Sin and Vanity in us; the Warnings we received against the Poison of ungodly Conversation, and the Snares of a deceitful tempting World; together with the friendly Reproofs, Assurances and Encouragements in the Ways of God, we may have met with in the Course of our Lives, from our holy Neighbours and Acquaintances; all these will be exactly stated against us. Not one Sermon we have heard, no Exhortation that we have met with, nor the least Part of the *Doctrine according to Godliness* which we were enlightened by, nor any of the awful Truths with regard to a future World, Heaven and Hell, which were declared to us, will then be forgotten; And all

all the Convictions of our own Minds, the Checks of our Consciences, the Resolutions and Vows that we trampled on, the Operations of God's Spirit which we stifled and quenched, and all the Calls from Word, Sacraments and Providences which we enjoyed, will be produced in their most aggravating Circumstances.

5thly. When God *marks Iniquities*, he will draw Things out of that Darkness and Obscurity which now they lurk in, and, as the Psalmist speaks, he will *set our secret Sins in the Light of his Countenance*. As all our Iniquities, in all their Aggravations, will be noted down; so God will examine them by that glorious and piercing Light wherewith he is ever clothed: And this will discover at once their whole Deformity and Vileness, it will manifest innumerable more lothsom Abominations and monstrous Irregularities in Sin, than ever could be discerned among the Clouds and Mists of this impure World, where the disgraceful Nature and fatal Tendency of Wickedness are in a great Measure hid from us; but the Rays of that dazzling Light, in which God dwells, will expose to open View what a beastly and poisonous Thing Sin is, and how worthy of the highest Contempt and Detestation of the rational World; nor can one Flaw in a Man's whole Life be concealed or varnished over, and all Disguises must be useless and vain.

6thly. When God *marks Iniquities*, he will weigh all Things in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and compare the whole Life and Actions of a Sinner with his own holy Law, and with the Relations that he stands under to himself; and in Proportion to these he will state the Account, and lay the Charge against the Transgressor. And this is indeed

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deed one very awful Meditation, whether we consider God, in *marking our Iniquities*, as a Judge or as a Creditor. Under the first Notion, he will place in the Scales of Justice the infinite Purity of that Law, which is in all Things *holy, just and good*, its Spirituality and Excellency, its diffusive Extent to the whole Train of a Man's Life, and the most secret Thoughts and Motions of his Soul; and he will also take into Account the infinite Authority of the almighty Creator, the universal Ruler and bountiful Preserver of the World, wherewith it is enforced; the terrible Curse and Vengeance whereby it is armed, and those noble Qualities and divine Beauties, which should recommend and endear it to the Esteem and Affection of reasonable Souls: After which God will mark down our Iniquities in all the aggravated Opposition, Contempt and Indignities, which they offer to so pure and excellent a Law.

And if we consider God as a Creditor, he marks all those Considerations that will increase our Debts, and render their Load more insupportable. He will set down to a Farthing what Creatures ow to the Author of their Being, and to their gracious Preserver, and what the Redeemed of the Lord ow to their dying Saviour, and their glorious Deliverer: He will mark down all the Outgoings of Love, which flowed from the Heart of our great high Priest, when he made himself a Sacrifice for Sin; all his Groans and Tears which he shed for us, all the Kindnesses of our best Friend, and the Yearnings of the Bowels of a tender Father who never wearied to do us good: He will bring into Account the Horrors of the infernal Prison, with the Torments of Hell, which he rescued us from; and the

the eternal Blessings and Pleasures he purchased for us; together with our Professions, Vows and Oaths to the Captain of our Salvation: And, having exactly stated the mighty Obligations which result from all these, he will mark down what a fearful Debt must have been contracted by the Forgetfulness and Contempt of them all, and how much Perjury, Treachery and Ingratitude we are chargeable with.

7thly. And, I shall but just mention it, God will prepare the Sinner himself for inspecting these Accounts, and qualifie him for this Purpose, by an enlightened Understanding, a refreshed Memory and an awakned Conscience, with all the other Faculties so ordered, that his Transgressions, in their infinite Numbers and Baseness, may be fully perceived by him, and their Horrors may make the deepest Impressions: And all these Iniquities, thus marked down, will God charge home upon the guilty Soul with an undisputed Evidence, demand full Satisfaction, and, by that *fery Indignation which shall consume the Adversary*, bestow on them a *just Recompence of Reward*.

I come now to the *second Head*, namely, to shew, that if God should mark Iniquity none would be able to stand; and indeed, after the Account which hath been given of this Matter, it may seem almost needless to insist upon this Subject, the desperate Case of a guilty Soul being so evident: Upon which account, and because your Time is so far gone, I shall but shortly touch at a few Things, which might be at greater length discoursed upon.

1. Then, *none can stand*, for the infinite Glory and awful Majesty of God, which is then represented

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sented to the Soul, cannot miss to strike Fear into the Heart of a Sinner, that is in the least Degree conscious of his Guilt; and those presumptuous Transgressors, who now flatter themselves into Security, and appear with unshaken Confidence, will be quite confounded, when they see with how terrible a God they have to make up their Accounts: The piercing Light which surrounds him will overwhelm the Hypocrite, when it reaches to the very Bottom of his Soul, and makes its Way through every Disguise: And that spotless Purity which the Angels adore with the profoundest Veneration, the dazzling Beauties of that Holiness, before which the smallest Transgression appears infinitely ugly and lothsom, will amaze the poor Sinner, when he sees he hath not to do with a Man like himself, and that he is brought into the Presence of that mighty Judge, unto whose glorious Excellencies the least Degree of Iniquity hath an utter Contrariety and Disproportion; so that the Articles which seemed so small that we quite overlooked them, become of an astonishing Weight, when it is God who marketh them down, and draweth up the Charge against us. Such Views of the great King of the Universe, of him *who rideth on the Heavens, and is extolled by his Name JAH*, which is the Word used in my Text, will naturally have the same Effect upon the stoutest Sinner, which they had on Job, when God manifested to him his Greatness, *Job xl. 3, &c. Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my Hand upon my Mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.*

A Man confident of his upright Dealings, and his outwardly regular and honest Conversation, may venture on a Trial before a human Tribunal; and, measuring God by Mankind, is ready to fancy that he will be able to plead his Cause before him also, and fill his Mouth with Arguments: But one View of the great God, when decked in Glory and arrayed with Majesty, will convince the vain Fool of his Mistake, and how impossible is it for him to stand in Judgment; for, as it is, Job xv. 14, 15. *What is Man that he should be clean? And he which is born of a Woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no Trust in his Saints; yea, the Heavens are not clean in his Sight. How much more abominable and filthy is Man, which drinketh Iniquity like Water?* And the most presumptuous Transgressor, when God sends in upon him such a Discovery of his Greatness, will reason as Job does, Job ix. 12, 13, 14, 20. *Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What dost thou? If God will not withdraw his Anger, the proud Helpers do stoop under him. How much less shall I answer him, and chuse out my Words to reason with him? If I justify my self, mine own Mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.*

2dly. As it will mightily amaze every Person, and, instead of being able to stand, make all his Joynts to tremble, and his Knees to fail under him, when, brought to the Bar, he hears the terrible Sound, Heb. x. 30, 31. *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord: And again, the Lord shall judge his People. It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God:* So the infinite Number and Variety of his Sins, will quite confound the speech-

speechless Creature, who will not have one Word to answer. I told you, that when God marks *Iniquities*, he will not miss one Article: And what a fearful and accursed Roll will then be unfolded; when every Thought, Word and Deed of a Man's whole Life, will be formed into a Libel against him; and such vast Crowds of vain Imaginations, earthly Desires, and impure Pleasures, hypocritical Pretences, and fraudulent or base Practices, will then crawl forth, a lothsom Spectacle to the guilty Man, which will cover him with the deepest Blushes, and become like so many enraged Vipers to sting his Conscience, and furious envenomed Serpents gnashing their Teeth at him. Horror, and Despair of ever standing against such implacable Adversaries, would then possess his Soul with Anguish, and make him *hang down his Head like a Buttruss*; the doleful Noise of so many loud Accusations, as shall on all Hands encompass him, and the Shrieks of an awakned Conscience, would, in such a Case, quite confound the best Man upon Earth, who should then be a Terror to himself round about; for who is he that liveth and sinneth not?

3dly. When God marks *Iniquities* none can ever stand, because, besides that none can plead guiltless, so no Man can possibly pay one Farthing of his Debt, or make any Reparation for his Offences: And thus every Ground of Confidence is intirely demolished. What canst thou, poor weak Creature, ever perform, that will bear the least Proportion to such mighty Crimes, the Breach of so holy a Law, the Contempt of so just and powerful a Government, the rebelling against thy Creator and thy King, and monstrous Ingratitude to thy best Friend? Each of these is accompanied with such fear-

fearful Guilt, that thy whole Life, though it should last to Eternity, could not repair the Injuries done to the Honour of God, and the Authority of his Commands, by the least Transgression: For thy Righteousness cannot profit thy Maker; and besides, this poisonous Evil is so deeply infectious that the Stain of it cannot be effaced, though thou shouldst be cleansed with Sope and Nitre, thy Sorrows and Sighs are of no avail, Floods of Tears cannot wash away the Pollution of this abominable Leprosy, and, though thou should weep to Eternity, and thy Eyes become never failing Springs of those bitter Waters, yet this stinking Plague will cleave fast to thee, and thou must *lie down in thy Shame, and thy Confusion shall cover thee.*

Besides, consider, O Sinner, that thou art a Creature, the Work of God's Hands, he hath a Right to all thy Faculties and Members, founded in thy very Being; so that *when thou hast done all, thou art an unprofitable Servant:* Thou already owest to thy Maker thy self and all thy Services, and therefore can never make up any Deficiencies, or pay one Farthing of Debt: And were there but one Mite owing, thou couldst not stand, all that thou hast and art belong to him, and thou canst only *give him of his own*, which surely can never contribute to balance Accounts with him: Nor will it help to pay thy Debt, though thou came before him with *Burnt-offerings, with Calves of a Year old; he will not be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with Ten Thousands of Rivers of Oyl; yea, though thou give the Fruit of thy Body for the Sin of thy Soul:* For, as it is *Psal. 1. 10, 12. Every Beast of the Forest is his, and the Cattle on a Thousand Hills. If he were hungry,*

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hungry, he would not tell thee ; for the World is his, and the Fulness thereof.

4thly. These very Things which Men are readiest to build their Confidence upon, and their Hopes of standing in Judgment, will not only prove insufficient Supports when God marks Iniquity, but will indeed become Articles of Accusation against us. When all our Performances are set in the Brightness of God's Face, and examined by so critical an Eye, our best Duties will be found defective and full of Blemishes, and all our Righteousnesses will appear as filthy Rags, the Sins of our holy Things will be laid to our Charge, the Dung of our Sacrifices will be thrown in our Faces, and our Prayers and Praises will be found full of Iniquity ; our Devotions, when raised to the highest Pitch and Zeal for God, when warmest in our Breasts, will then be manifested to be cold, lifeless and inactive ; and our most exalted Affections towards divine Things, our faint Love to God and Esteem of him, will themselves make us ashamed, and keep us from standing, when we see how infinitely disproportioned they are to our Duty, how far they come short of what we owe to the Author of our Being, and the Saviour of our perishing Souls, and what is due to such incomparably amiable Excellencies : So that these Defects will be a Part of our Charge ; and, because in every Thing we fall short of the Glory of God, our very religious Duties will increase our Account, and be marked down against us : And, since as it is, *James ii. 10. Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all*, it is evident, that our good Works themselves, being imperfect, will cast us in Judgment, and subject us to

to the fearful Doom, *Deut. xxvii. 26. Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the Words of this Law, to do them.*

5thly. *Who can stand?* For thou wilt be utterly deprived of all those Means of escaping, which Men often successfully use to stand in human Courts. Thou canst not, O Sinner, by any Cunning impose upon the omniscient Judge, no Disguise or false Face will cheat him, or cover the least Blemish; thou canst not divert him from a thorough Search into all thy Crimes, nor bribe him into an Acquittance of the Guilty, or a palliating of thy Transgressions; thou canst not substract any Part of the Evidence, nor hire a Witness into a perjured Concealment of thy Wickedness: And thou art as little able to flee from Justice, for tho' thou take the Wings of the Morning, and hide thy self in the uttermost Parts of the Earth, his Hand will soon find thee out, while thou art utterly impotent to resist him: Nor will one dare to interpose in thy behalf, or make any Solicitations with the inexorable Judge; for, as *Eli* bespeaks his Sons, *I. Sam. ii. 25. If one Man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him: But if a Man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?*

6thly. As thou cannot escape Punishment, so it will be impossible for thee ever to endure it. A Man may be said, in some Sense, to stand in Judgment, tho' Sentence pass against him, if he have the Courage to despise it, and bear it with Fortitude; and thus our blessed Saviour and his Apostles did stand, tho' condemned, when they endured the Cross and despised the Shame: But, O despairing Sinner, thou wilt quite sink beneath the Burden, and thy

If the Lord mark Iniquities,

languishing Spirits will utterly fail, when the Terrors of the Almighty are set in array against thee, and pierce thy Soul. Can thine Heart endure? or can thy Hands be strong in the Day that he shall deal with thee? Who ever hardened himself against his Maker and prospered? Will any Hero of Sin then be able to brave it out against God? No, the Sinners in Sion are afraid, Fearfulness hath surprized the Hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with devouring Fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting Burnings.

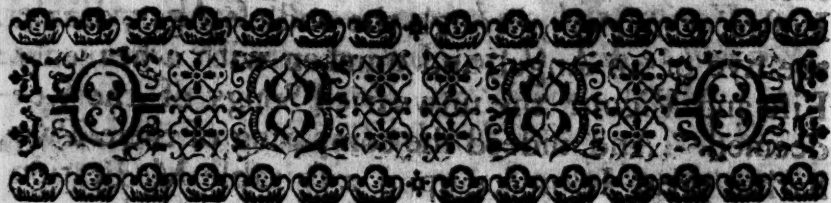
7thly. We can never stand when God marks Iniquity: For as we cannot pretend to justify our selves, or say that our Hands are clean; so we are not able to offer the least Thing in Mitigation of our Offence, but will be forced to stand absolutely speechless and inexcusable. We can with no Justice accuse God as a severe and unprofitable Master: We dare not challenge these Laws, which are incomparably more to be desired than the finest Gold, and are the brightest Glory, and greatest Felicity of such as are wise to obey them: And we cannot alledge Ignorance of our Duty, or that we wanted Means of Knowledge and Instruction; since God hath caused the Day-spring from on high to over-shadow us, and hath not ceased to be a Reprover unto us. What then can we object against God's Ways and Service? He may refer his Cause to ourselves, we could have nothing to answer. And surely, my Friends, we that are Christians, who know how infinitely amiable and merciful a Lord he is, must have our Mouths stopped up, and can never render any Return to these killing Reproaches which God makes, and the confounding Questions he puts to us, Micah vi. 3. O my People, what have I done unto thee?

thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. Jer. ii. 5. What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after Vanity, and are become vain? Ezek. xviii. 31: Why will ye die, O ye House of Israel? turn ye and live. Match. xxiii. 37. How often would I have gathered thee, as a Hen doth her Chickens under her Wings; but thou wouldst not?



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SER



SERMON V.

ROM. v. 8. *But God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.*



WHEN we have so near a Prospect of shewing forth the Lord's Death in the holy Sacrament of his Supper, and ought to be employed in preparing our Souls for a worthy partaking thereof, it seems a very proper Subject of our Meditation, to take an affecting View of the Corruption and Vileness of our Natures since our Apostacy from God, and of the exceeding Sinfulness of our Transgressions which the Blood of a Redeemer was necessary to expiate, and purify us from: That so we may be filled with Shame and Blushing when we look up to Heaven, and abhor our selves in Dust and Ashes; and that then

then we may raise our admiring Thoughts to that eternal and unchangeable Love, which sweetned and endeared every Step of a Saviour's Humiliation, and shone in his Death with that bright and amiable Lustre, which will, through the endless Ages, dazzle the Eye of an Angel, and quicken with a heavenly Life and Vigour the unwearied Songs of the Redeemed. And indeed the comparing of these Two hath a great Influence upon a suitable Meditation on either of them; for what, my Friends, can yield us a more melting View of the amazing Filth and Horror of our Transgressions, than a Sight of those endless Compassions which they trample under Foot, of that Mercy which they spurn at, and the very Blood of our dying Friend and Saviour which they scornfully reject, and treat with so contemptuous Ingratitude? And, on the other hand, what an eternal Beauty and Excellency is this free generous Love clothed with, when the Object of it appears so worthless and abominable; hath not only no Pretences to Merit, but, in all Respects may create Disdain and Hatred? The betraying of such a Friend, and rebelling against so merciful a Sovereign, must make the Transgression exceeding sinful; and that mighty Love, which is not quenched by the overflowing Torrents of so great Provocations, must be strong and invincible, as the Pity and Kindness of an infinite God; nor can the right Hand of a Creator be fuller of Power, than the Heart of such a Captain of Salvation must be of victorious all-conquering Love. With so incomprehensibly endearing an Argument doth *God commend his Love towards us, in that, while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.* No Iniquity of our Heart and Life, nor the smallest

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Stain of our Natures, but what enforces and beautifies his Grace, and will afford a fruitful Subject to one of the raised Songs of Zion above, *To him that loved us, and washed us in his Blood.*

I shall take up very little of your Time in considering the Context. The Apostle, in the preceding *Verse*, observes, that a Person's dying for another was such an uncommon Instance of generous Friendship, that it was not to be expected amongst Men: For when one had all these great Qualities that could render him eminently useful to the World, and endear him to their Affections; yet, to preserve even so valuable a Life of a good Man, it was but a *Peradventure* that any would be found who should *dare to die*. From whence, in my Text, he shews how incomparably a Redeemer's Love is raised above any rival Affection, that not for a Friend or a good Man, but for the vilest and basest Creatures he *became obedient unto the Death*.

These Words may be shortly divided into these three Parts. 1. We have the woful Condition of apostate Men, when God passed by and looked upon them, *we were yet Sinners*, saith the Apostle, which intimates, that not only some Iniquities were chargeable upon us, or that little Escapes were to be found in our Lives; but that we were absolutely under the base Tyranny of our Lusts, and Slaves to our Corruptions, we were *lying dead in Trespasses*, and all the Faculties of our Soul were so defiled, the whole Tendency of our Desires and Labours had become so impure and earthly, that, in every respect, we might be justly called *Sinners*, Iniquity having got the Dominion over us: Thus the Word is used, *John ix. 31.*

Now

Now we know that God heareth not Sinners, in Opposition to whom it is said, 1. John iii. 9. *Whoever is born of God doth not commit Sin.* It is true indeed in many Things all offend and come short of the Glory of God ; but here lies a Difference, in those who are brought under the Obedience of Christ, notwithstanding of numberless Defects, the Power of an immortal Life, and the Love of their Saviour, are still the main governing Principles of their Lives : But before this victorious Grace possesses our Hearts, we are Sinners, led captive by our Lusts at their Pleasure, and from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot, full of the mortal Wounds Sin hath given us, and loathsome with the putrifying Sores of this impure Disease : And then, with respect to God our Maker, we not only sometimes wavered in our Obedience, giving ear to the disloyal Whisperings of Temptation, and turned cool in his Service ; but we had openly apostatized from our Allegiance to the almighty King of Heaven, joyned with the implacable Enemies of his Glory, and set ourselves in the directest Opposition to all the Designs of his Grace and Holiness ; we strove to smother any remaining Sentiments of Duty, and to deface his Image in our Souls ; we provoked him by daily affronting and vilifying the Purity of his Laws, and the Majesty of his Authority ; and, by our rebellious Example, we ensnared others into the same treacherous Backslidings ; so that the Apostle represents us as Enemies, *Ver. 10. For if when we were Enemies, says he, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son.*

2^{dly}. In the Text, we have that glorious Miracle of Love, which a compassionate Redeemer wrought for Sinners and Enemies, *Christ died for us* : He not

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only submitted to all the Precepts of a burdensome Law, vailed over the Glory of a heavenly King with the Form of a Servant, under which he patiently endured the continual contradiction of Sinners against himself; but his mighty Love was not quenched by the Floods of Death in all its Terrors, nor shrunk back from that greatest and most formidable Proof of generous and heroic Friendship. With what a solemn Aw and grateful Admiration should our Souls be seized, when the Death of the Son of God sounds in our Ears; and so amazing a Condescension, as his exchanging the glorious Throne of Heaven for the Shame and Pain of the Cross, is proclaimed to us? At the Views of this the Angels are possessed with an endless Wonder, as will Saints be when in Heaven, they shall with one Look, behold the exalted Majesty of his Kingdom, and the Lowness of his Humiliations.

3dly. We have the Influence that our State, as Sinners, hath upon this greatest Act of a Redeemer's Mercy, it commendeth the Love of God towards us. Our Sins give a fresh Glory to this Love, heighten its Excellency, and render it more amiable to our Souls: Or, as the Word may be translated, this establisheth and confirmeth the Love of God; it is such an astonishing Demonstration of its infinite Greatness, that we can have no Room to doubt of the Reality and Sincerity of all the glorious Things that are spoken thereof, nor any Place for Fear, that so affectionate a Master will ever be wanting to perfect our Happiness; for as it is *Rom. viii. 32.* He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things? And if the vile and hateful Character of Sinners and Enemies did not overcome his Love, but

but then he died for us, can any Thing else ever diminish it? And is not this a practical Demonstration of the Stability of that comforting Promise, *Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33. I will visit their Transgressions with the Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes: Nevertheless my Lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my Faithfulness to fail.*

From these Words this Doctrine does naturally follow,

That our being Sinners and Enemies when Christ died for us, is a most endearing Commendation, and unshaken Establishment of the Love of God to Men.

In discoursing from which I design, through the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, to do these Three Things. 1. I shall shortly represent our woful Condition as Sinners and Enemies. 2^{dly}. I shall shew how mightily this commends the Love of God, and the dying Compassions of Christ towards us. 3^{dly}. I shall draw some practical Inferences from what may be discoursed on the former Heads.

I begin with the first of these, *namely*, shortly to represent the woful Condition of Men as Sinners and Enemies to their God. And, on this Occasion, I shall mention nothing as imported therein, but what may tend to illustrate and confirm the second Head of Discourse, *namely*, this miserable State's commending the Love of God to us.

1. As Sinners and Enemies we had removed our selves far from God, *Isa. lix. 2. Your Iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your Sins have hid his Face from you that he will not hear.* As Creatures there is an infinite Distance between our frail Nature and the eternal Excellencies of his Deity, we

all

all are as nothing before him, and lighter than Vanity : But though our Beings have thus no Proportion to his Greatness, yet we are not made thereby the Objects of his Hatred and Displeasure ; whereas Sin, as it is removed from the Beauties of his Holiness, at an infinitely greater Distance than the Heavens are separated from the Earth, so it displaces us from his Favour, *wherain is Life*, and breaks off all Communion and Fellowship, for *Fools cannot stand in his Sight*, and *he hateth all the Workers of Iniquity* : He then banisheth from his Presence *that abominable Thing which his Soul abhorreth* ; for as it is Prov. xv. 29. *The Lord is far from the Wicked, every Sin is a Mountain of Provocation that is hard to get over.* And in a State of Nature the whole Faculties of our Soul were far from God : Our polluted Understanding hid it self in Darkness, and could not abide his clear and piercing Light, which was kept by Corruption from shining into our Souls ; our base Affections, instead of being enlivened by the joyful Hopes of an eternal Heaven, and raising themselves to God their Glory and Happiness, were debased as low as Hell, and sunk far down into the Mire of Sin and Sense ; and that Love, which the divine Excellencies should have ever allured and blown up into a vehement and constant Flame, followed hard after Lies and Vanity, and was prostituted to every fading cheating Temptation : And then, the whole of our Designs and Views, which were confined to this Earth, and tended to nothing but to gratifie our Covetousness, Pride and Wantonness, were far from the Counsels and Purposes of God, which are all beautified with Holiness, and compassed about with his great Faithfulness. Thus we had abandoned our Maker, broke
off

off all Conversation and turned Strangers to him; and while we wandred after Idols we left our native Country, these pure and peacable Mansions of the heavenly Zion, that City of God, and strayed afar off into the dark and impure Regions of Satan's Kingdom, and there dwelt with the *Dog in his Vomit, and the Sow wallowing in the Mire.*

And now may we not shied a Fear at the dismal Prospect? Oh, that we should be at a Distance from the Fountain of Good and Excellency, and be far off from the very Life of our Souls, and Length of our Days. What Madnes is it to flee away from the best Friend and tenderest Master? And what an unconceivable Misery, to be separated from God our Glory and our Joy, from whom springs all our Salvation, for *in his Presence is Life and Gladness*; and to be thus Strangers to the most amiable and exalted Object, to Majesty which is sweetned by Condescension, and to that exceeding Power, which with mighty Love and Grace render Greatness truly excellent. Nor have we any Cloke for our Apostacy, since we can never answer Gods Question, *Jerem. ii. 5. Thus saith the Lord, What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after Vanity, and have become vain?* And now so great a Distance had the Love of Christ to overcome: He was, if I may so speak, to seek us out who had lost our selves in an unknown Land, that so he might save us, for *he remembered us in our low Estate*; and while we were so far separated from him, his Love was warmed towards us: This Love then must bear a Proportion to our Estrangement from God, which being so infinitely great, how glorious must be these Compassions which overflowed? When, as

it is *Eph. ii. 13.* *Ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.*

2dly. While we were thus separated from God, our Souls withered and decayed in all respects, became weak, faint and ugly; being cut off from him who is the Life of a Spirit, from whom it must derive all its Excellency and Comeliness: We were now robbed of our Strength and Joy, a lothsom Disease had tainted our whole Nature, defiled all our Faculties, and filled every Thing with Confusion and Disorder; so that from Head to Foot there was no Soundness in us, but Wounds, and Bruises, and putrifying Sores. We not only were deprived of every Thing that might merit Friendship, or stir up Love; but our monstrous Vileness caused us to be ashamed, made the Spectators hide their Face from so lothsom an Object, or look upon us with Detestation: The more holy and excellent any Angels were that beheld us, the greater would be their Aversion to so diseased Souls, and, instead of approaching us, they would flee the farther from so detestable and frightful a Monster; for no Sores are so noisom and stinking on a Body, no Leprosy so hateful, as the Plague of Sin, when it spreads itself upon a Soul, and renders it impure and disordered by furious Passions and ungodly Lusts. And if so, oh! how abominable must we have been in the Eyes of an infinitely holy God, who glories in his Purity, and is ever surrounded by eternal Righteousness; and looks upon Evil as the greatest Contradiction to his Nature, the most hateful and shameful Object, that which would overturn his Government, and deface the Beauties of his Holiness in which he rejoyces. And God, who sees with a clearer Light than Angels or Men, will perceive

ceive all the Disgrace and Ugliness of this fearful Monster, when he sets our Iniquities in the Brightness of his Countenance. Could the Seraph, that entertained the most admiring Thoughts of divine Goodness, ever imagine that God could have treated such Sinners as we were, with any Thing but Scorn and Contempt, and abandoned us to our Shame and Folly? What a fruitful Argument will this afford me on the *second* Head to commend the Love of God? Since it is, as he speaks, *Ezek. xvi. 6. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own Blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy Blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy Blood, Live.* But then,

3dly. Before we were reconciled by the Blood of Christ, we were not only alienated from the Life of Godliness, and at a Distance from our Maker, but openly engaged in a serious War against Heaven, we had put on the Character of Traitors, and, with the Weapons of Rebellion in our Hands, joyned in a Confederacy with Hell, and made the Devil our Leader in fighting against our righteous King. Sin is the only Injury and Affront we can do to a holy God, which strikes at the very Vitals of his Government, and would pull him from his Throne of Holiness; and, consequently, Sinners are his only Enemies, and Satan, who leads them on in this hellish Battle, is actuated with an implacable Hatred and Malice against his almighty Maker. It is the Voice of Transgressors, that they *will not have him to reign over them*; and the secret Wish of their impure Souls, *that there were no God to curb their furious Appetites, or to judge the World in Righteousness*: Could they wrest the Sceptre out of his Hand, and rob him of all his Dignity and Glory,

Glory, their Ways declare they would be guilty of that Impiety. Sinners, in the directest Manner, are Adversaries to Uprightness and Purity: Now this is the chief Perfection which Angels celebrate in God, when they proclaim, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, who is glorious in the Beauties of his Holiness*: And, while it is the great Design of all God's Counsels and Providences, to advance the Honour of Holiness, and at length finish and purifie it to Perfection, in that Kingdom wherein dwelleth everlasting Righteousness; the great Tendency of Sin, is to defeat all these Purposes which are so much at the Heart of God, to baffle his Power, and make his Wisdom of no Effect, by their spreading the contagious Plague of Sin, and propagating the Kingdom of Darkness and Impurity.

And then, as we were thus Rebels against the Authority of a Creator, Men by Nature place themselves in the directest Opposition to the noblest Views of the divine Excellencies, which shine with so amiable a Beauty in the Redeemer's Face, who, that by the Riches of his Grace, he might purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works, both died and rose again. Now, Men who indulge their Lusts, and are Slaves to Sin, by every Transgression do what they can to defraud a Redeemer of all his Glory, to blast his Triumphs, and advance the Tyranny of Satan on the Ruins of his Throne; these are the King's Enemies, to each of whom it may be said what is spoken by James, *Jam. iv. 4. Ye Adulterers and Adulteresses, know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a Friend of the World is the Enemy of God.*

And

And oh ! my Soul, with what Horror and Confusion shouldst thou look upon thy self, who hast been so old a Rebel against the justest Authority, and the dearest Rights ? What an amazing Length of Madness and Wickedness must thou be arrived at, that thou canst find in thy Heart to be an Enemy to the loveliest Excellencies, and the most alluring Bounty ; an Enemy to the God that made thee, that is thy best Friend, and pities thy Misery ; and, were it not for his abused Patience, would, by one Look of his Countenance, frown all his Enemies into nothing, or, which is more terrible, into Hell. Mad Man ! thou fightest against thy own Life, and pursues with unrelenting Malice and Hatred, infinite Goodness it self and inexhausted Riches of Grace, omnipotent Power guided by unerring Understanding, and beautified by unchangeable Love : These are thy Enemies, against which thou furiously fights under the Conduct of that cruel lying Spirit, who hates thee with the Malice and Envy of a Devil, and can delight in nothing so much as in thy Ruin, *Be astonished at this, O my Soul ; ye Heavens, be horribly afraid.* But then, 4thly. Being in such a Case, we are exposed to the Vengeance and Fury of our provoked Sovereign, who may, not only in the strictest Justice, punish us with everlasting Destruction, but the Glory of his Perfections, the Honour of his Laws, and the ungrateful Contempt of his Goodness and Forbearance, all seem to require this of him, and to cry aloud for Vengeance, and make it necessary that he should not spare us.

Thus I have given some View of our State, when Christ died for us, Sinners and Enemies. And, beside, what hath been hinted already, how plainly,

ly, and with a Force that should be irresistible, does the most obvious View hereof commend the Love of God to us, in that *while we were thus Sinners and Enemies Christ died for us?* But I shall now proceed, at some greater Length, to shew in the *second Place*, that the Consideration of what I have now discoturfed on, is an infinitely endearing Commendation of the Love of God towards us, demonstrates its incomparable Value and Excellency, and that it can never be enough praised and adored by us. I shall not insist upon the inestimable Benefits which Christ procured for us by his Death, when he *blessed us in turning us away from our Iniquities*; and is thereby *reconciling us unto God our only Joy*, upon whom depends our eternal All; and against whose Majesty an obstinate Rebellion must have issued in our irreparable Ruin: But shall only observe,

1. That this in an eminent Manner commends to us the Sovereignty, Riches and Freedom of God's Love. Amongst Men, the most generous and disinterested Acts of Love are owing to Esteem and Affection, to the good Qualities of the Person, and the dear Relation they stand under to him; for, says Christ, *John xv. 13. Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends*; nor can an Instance be found in a Creature, where it placed an Affection upon any Object, but where something was felt, which attracted and pleased it: But this was what distinguished this herolick Love from the inferior Passions of created Beings, that we were naked and bare, without the smallest Ornament, or the least comely Feature, nothing that deserved Esteem, or could engage Affection. It is the Glory of a Redeemer's Compassions, that all the Sources and Springs of his Love take their Rise from him.

himself, his own Perfection is the Fountain of his Mercy: *he is gracious to whom he will be gracious*, not for that they are worthy, but because God himself is Love: And 'tis upon this account, that these Mercies never fail, that they are like himself, inexhaustible, and endure for ever. What is said of *Israel*, my Text shews may be applied to every Sinner, *Deut. vii. 7, 8* *The Lord did not set his Love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in Number than any People, for ye were the fewest of all People; but because the Lord loved you:* So that all the Honour, the whole Strength and Warmth of this glorious Love centers in God himself, nor hath a Creature the smallest Share in it. And now, how ought this to commend it to our Souls, and engage us to give him alone the Praises? It should put us on meditating Songs, in which no Rival of his can bear any Part; nor the least Merit of ours, diminish Songs devoted to the Admiration of so pure and unmixed Compassion; the Meditation hereof should be sweet to us, which the wondrous Minds of Saints will dwell on to Eternity, when every Thought of their infinite Emptiness will raise their Hallelujahs to a higher Note, and be a new Ornament to his Grace: *I. John iv. 9, 10.* *In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* But,

2dly. We were not only destitute of the least amiable Quality, but were polluted by all that Impurity which could beget Hatred instead of Love: So that herein is the Love of God commended to us in that while we were Sinners, Christ died for us; since

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on that account we not only wanted every Thing that might attract his Affection, but a Redeemer had insurmountable Difficulties to overcome, which a created Affection would soon have succumbed to, and been conquered by. We who see so little of the Evil and Vileness of Sin, are not capable to conceive the Greatness of this Mystery: But take a View of infinite Holiness, what Disproportion, what Contrariety betwixt it and Sin; how the divine Indignation centers upon Wickedness, and how he is angry at nothing but the Workers of it; what monstrous lothsom Deformities, he who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, must discover in Disobedience: And then think what Sentiments of Disdain and Hatred he must have towards us, who were vile in our Sins, and covered over with our Shame. The least Spot of our Natures was an almost impassable Mountain in the Way of his Love, and strove to stop the Outgoings of his Grace: Had God been less holy, or we not so much Sinners, the Matter had not been so astonishing; but when a Redeemer was infinite in Purity, and the Transgressor dead in Trespasses, what admirable, what divine Excellency must be in that victorious Love, which triumphs over so many Provocations, which neither our Imperfection nor Ugliness could extinguish or cool? *Eph. ii. 4, 5.* But God who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love where-with he loved us, even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickned us together with Christ, by Grace are ye saved. Thou hadst debased thy self, O my Soul, as low as Hell, and become vile, was the Scorn of insulting Devils, and so lothed by all the holy Angels, that there was none to pity or help thee; the Cherubs and Seraphs fled from thee as a fright-
ful

ful Monster; and had not Bowels enough to endure so ugly a Spectacle: Yet the Love of him who was infinitely purer than they, became thy Hope and Salvation. What a hard Heart is it, that will not be softened by the Words of God? *Ezek. xvi. 5, 8, None Eye pitied thee, to have Compassion upon thee: But thou wast cast out in the open Field, to the lothing of thy Person, in the Day that thou wast born: Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy Time was the Time of Love, and I spread my Skirt over thee, and covered thee. But,*

In the *third Place*, our being Enemies occasioned more Difficulties in the Way of this Love, and consequently brightned its Glory when it overcame them. The dying for, or even doing good to Friends, is so seldom to be met with in this World, that no wonder, the very first Proposal of a Sovereign's dying for a Rebel should amaze us, and lead us up to the Fulness of God, as the only Fountain such prevailing Affections could proceed from. What incomparable Patience must it be, that was not outwearied by the Indignities of insolent Transgressors, and which, instead of being kindled into Fury by our Hatred of him, seemed to be the rather more animated in working our Salvation? God pitied us when we had no Compassion on our selves, when we refused to hearken and be reclaimed: His Love had to conquer our obstinate Wills, to perswade us to be happy, and incline us to suffer him to save us: How oft hath the fretful Sinner repined at the Yoke, abused Goodness, and laughed with Scorn at Forbearance? And when Christ was dying for them, how busie were Men in dishonouring him with all the Spite and Malice of Hell, which they willingly served? What Love

but that of a God could have born with such Usage? And how invincible must it be, that still proved victorious over Distance, Baseness, Impurity, Enmity? Surely we may apply to this, with a distinguished Emphasis, what Solomon speaks, Song viii. 6, 7. *Love is strong as Death, Jealousie is cruel as the Grave, the Coals thereof are Coals of Fire which hath a most vehement Flame: Many Waters cannot quench Love, neither can the Floods drown it; if a Man would give all the Substance of his House for Love, it would utterly be contemned. Every Act of our Rebellion beautifies a Redeemer's Love; and where these are infinite in their Number, and endless in their Variety and Hainousness, there can be no comprehending the divine Glories of that Love, the Height, and Breadth, and Length whereof surpass created Understanding.*

4thly. By our being Sinners and Enemies, the divine Perfections were, if I may so speak, at a Struggle amongst themselves: And Love had to deal with Holiness, Majesty, Justice, which all seemed to oppose its Operations. * * *





SERMON VI.

PSALM CXIX. 59, 60. *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.*



THE Fear of that God whose Kingdom ruleth over all, who sways a Sceptre of almighty Power, that is able in a Moment to reach and crush into Pieces the greatest of his Enemies who most excel in Strength; before whom all the Nations melt away as Wax and are dissolved, yea, the roring Lion himself, who maketh such Havock amongst Mankind, looks pale, faints and trembleth; And the Love of him who possesseth in the highest Degree all that is amiable and engaging, being clothed at the same Time with the awful Garment of Honour and Majesty, and the Charms of Mercy, Goodness and

Truth still going before his Face: In a Word, all the Duties which we ow to the infinitely perfect God our Maker, every the least Precept of the holy Religion we profess, are so just, equal and good, so exactly suitable to the Nature of an immortal Spirit, that has not debased it self by becoming a Slave to Sense and its vile Pleasures, so directly tending to advance our valuable and eternal Interests, and so much for our true Honour and Satisfaction: That it is scarce conceivable that any Soul, which discovers the Beauties and Advantages of Religion, and hath them fairly laid before it, would ever choose the Evil and refuse the Good, go on in the Paths of Iniquity, and never mind that Godliness, which at once stares in upon the Soul with all the Terrors of enraged Omnipotence, and the dreadful Flames of a consuming Fire flashing in upon the awakned Conscience, and yet calmly *draws with the Cords of a Man*, and allures by the Amiability of Compassions and Grace: These are so powerful, so convincing Arguments, Motives so endearing, that it is hard to think they should not be able to make their Way through the little low Pleasures and the deceitful Good, which Sin can lay in the Balance with them, or the contemptible Objections which, at the best, can ever be made against serious Christianity.

Upon these Accounts, the two great Plots, in which the irreconcilable Enemy to the Glory and Happiness of our Souls labours so indefatigably, and, alas, with so much fatal and lamentable Success, are,

First. To cloud over the Mind with Darkness and Ignorance, to keep shut those Eyes of the Understanding,

derstanding, which, he knows, were they opened, could not miss to see Iniquity unmasked of its fading Lustre, which vanisheth away from Knowledge, and appears only in the Night of Deceit; and to be enamoured with the Ways of God and the Religion of Christ, which seek no more but to be fairly examined into, and make no doubt, if Sinners would give themselves leave to taste, that they would see that the Lord is gracious and good. The Devil knows that Consideration and Thought are the most dangerous Enemies to his Kingdom, but Stupidity and a careless Unconcernedness its securest Guards; and therefore he bends most of his Contrivance to throw in one Vanity after another, and by them to amuse the Soul, and divert it from reflecting upon its Management, or so much as looking at these Ways in which it is running with such foolish Precipitancy and Haste.

Or, 2dly. When he is not able to prevent altogether the Sinner's thinking upon his latter End, nor to thicken this Mist so, but that the Flames of Hell and the Terrors of an invisible World pierce sometimes through it, and the bottomless Pit about which he is so thoughtless sporting himself, lays open something of its Horror and Dread to his Eyes; when he cannot so far impose upon the Soul, but that the Rivers of Pleasures which overflow in Heaven, and the Joys of an immortal Life appear desirable and lovely to it, and make it breathe out Balaam's Wish, *May I die the Death of the righteous*: Then our cunning and deceitful Adversary endeavours to flatter the Sinner with Peace in the latter End, though he be not overhasty in running the Ways of God's Commands; he urges a Death-bed Repentance, which may

bring to Heaven without losing the Enjoyments of this present Life ; and present home the Arguments which too too much prevail upon corrupted Natures, to delay the abandoning the Pleasures of Sin, and the beginning the Christian Course, with the Hopes of still Abundance of Time before hand for that Exercise, till at last, the poor deluded Soul hath its Days cut short, and drops into the horrible Pit, without ever any more Space to repent.

It is, upon these Accounts, my Purpose in this Discourse, by the Assistance of Gods holy and gracious Spirit, to endeavour, both to persuade us to a serious Consideration as to our Conduct while upon this Earth ; and, since on it depends all that is included in an Eternity of the noblest Happiness, or the greatest Extremity of Torment and Misery, with the Psalmist to *think upon our Ways, and turn our Feet to God's Testimonies* : And also to apply our selves to work this only important Work *while it is in Day*, to set about it immediately, to run in this Race with unwearied Ardour and Diligence ; and never to be diverted from it by the numerous Amusements and childish Toys, these dangerous Snares of a tempting World ; never to be prevailed upon to delay to another Season, what ought certainly to be our first Business, *to make haste, and not to delay to keep his Commandments*.

This Psalm consists mostly of earnest Petitions which the Psalmist puts up to God, of which there is a great Variety in it ; but all, I think, tending to this Purpose, that he might have his Understanding enlightened to behold the Beauty and Excellency of Religion, and his Will powerfully inclined to observe all the righteous Judgments there-

of :

of : Together with many of his Resolutions for that end ; and some Account of his own Practice in obedience to the divine Law, and of the Temper of his Soul, with the Methods by following of which he arrived to it. Of this last Kind are the Words which I have now read, and in them we may take notice of these Things following.

1. We have the Psalmist's awakening out of a Sleep he had been, for a considerable Time, overwhelmed by. He had lived in too much Sloth, without so seriously thinking upon his Goings ; and though possibly he might be running fast enough, yet it was in a Hurry and Confusion, like one in a Dream, without any reasonable Design, and ignorant of the Measures he was pursuing. Now he bethinks himself, and stops till he calmly consider the Issue of Things, and the End of the Paths which he was treading ; and searches more accurately into the Pretensions unto Happiness and valuable Good, which the World and the Offers of Sin made ; and considers the various Arts whereby he had been hitherto ensnared. The Word translated *thought*, according to the grammatical Construction of it in the *Hebrew*, signifies not a transient View and a slight Examination, but a deep serious Meditation upon his *Ways*, upon which his Soul was fixed, and employed all its Powers and Strength.

2dly. We have the Effect which this had upon him, and *inward my Feet unto thy Testimonies*. I need scarce put you in Mind, that both a religious and ungodly Life are expressed in Scripture by *going*, *running*, *walking*, to point out to us the Agency of the Soul, particularly its active Power, the Will, therein, and also the Progress that it naturally makes

makes in them: For the longer a Person hath been engaged in the divine Life, or the greater Continuance he hath made in the *Tents of Sin*, he will be the farther arrived, and have made higher Advances either in Virtue or Vice. Upon which account, the Psalmist very fitly expresseth this Change, which Consideration and Thought made upon him, by *turning his Feet to God's Testimonies*. He altered the Course he had formerly taken, gave his Soul a quite contrary Direction, and made his Love, Hatred, Affection and Esteem point to intirely different Airths.

I cannot but take Notice, that the Transition which is made in the Text, from the Occasion of this Alteration, *I thought on my Ways*, to the Change itself, is very lofty and elegant. He does not tell us, that, after a Review of them, he saw the Folly and Danger of Sin, the Debasedness of its Pleasures, and the Poison of all its Delights; or that, upon a Search into God's Law, he was convinced, that what he imagined so severe, rigid and frightful before, was now all amiable and lovely; no, but immediately adds, *I turned my Feet unto thy Testimonies*. Than which I can conceive nothing more noble or strong; for it emphatically says, that there was no Need to express the Appearance his Ways had when once he thought upon them: What must be the Consequence of his Deliberation was so plain, *namely*, that Sin never prevails but where it is masked over with some false Beauties, and the inconsiderate foolish Sinner credulously gives Ear to its Inchantments, and is not at Pains and Care to enquire into them; for a deep thorough Search would soon discover, that its fairest Appearances are but lying Vanities, and that he who is captivated with that empty

empty Show, is in the same Circumstances with a Person in a Dream, who can please himself with his Fancy only while asleep, and that his awaking out of it no sooner or more certainly discovers the Cheat, than a serious thinking upon the Ways of Iniquity and Rebellion against God, will manifest the fatal Madness of Men in ever pursuing them. Sin is like an Enemy coming into the Army in Disguise, who, however craftily he may lay his Measures, and with Impudence pretend to be a Friend, yet he can only pass upon the easy or negligent Centinel, and will be found out to be a Spy by the diligent and active, who takes off the Vizard, and dives into the Bottom of the Contrivance: So it is for Want of Consideration, that what is really an Enemy to God, and hateful and provoking to our Maker, can ever be received or caressed by us as our Friend, or as tending to promote our abiding Pleasure and true Interest.

3dly. In the Text we have the Fixeness of the Psalmist's Resolution, and his putting it immediately in Practice, *I made Haste and delayed not*. After he had got a View of his foregoing Life in its true Colours, and had impartially searched into it, he beheld so many and so important Arguments for his changing it, and beginning a nobler, even a divine Life, that he did not linger to make a Treaty with Sin, or suffer himself any longer to be bewitched by it. He saw that Religion was too lovely, its Ways too full of Pleasantness and Peace, to leave it possible for him to make over much Haste in entering upon them, and that he could never run with Vigour enough, or outdo and overheat himself in aspiring after so exalted a Happiness, as the Laws of God afforded to all who diligently obeyed them;

them: The Vileness and disgraceful Nature of Sin, with its terrible Consequences, the Anger of a God, and the flaming Fire of his Vengeance, were too dreadful for him to be lazy and languishing in fleeing from such mighty Wrath; and therefore he, with as much Haste, fled from the Ways of Transgression and Disobedience, as the frightened Israelites did from the Tabernacles of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, when, as it is Num. xvi. 34. *All Israel that were round about them fled at the Cry of them; for they said, Lest the Earth swallow us up also.*

From the Text, thus explained in some Measure, we may remark these Two doctrinal Truths.

1. That as a stupid Unconcernedness about our Management and Neglect of serious Thought, is one great Source of the Wickedness and Folly of Men, and the eternal Ruin of many Souls; so it must be highly reasonable, and would prove of inconceivable Advantage with respect to our everlasting Concerns, that we should deliberately and calmly examine our Ways, consider the Nature of them, and take an attentive Prospect of their End and Issue.

2^{dly}. That if we would improve, to any valuable Purposes, a Conviction of the Excellency of Religion, and of the exceeding Greatness and Perfection of that Reward, which all who sincerely keep God's Commandments shall assuredly be crowned with; and of the absolute Necessity there is for abandoning the deceitful Pleasures of Sin, and complying with the Word of Grace preached in the Gospel: Then we must no longer abide amongst the Tents of Rebels, but immediately, without any Delay, enter upon a religious Life, and make Haste to keep all the Commandments of God.

I begin with the *First*, namely, That, as a stupid Unconcernedness about our Management and Neglect of serious Thought, is one great Source of the Folly and Wickedness of Men, and the eternal Ruin of many Souls; so it must be highly reasonable, and would prove of inconceivable Advantage with respect to our everlasting Concerns, that we should deliberately and calmly examine our Ways, consider the Nature of them, and take an attentive Prospect of their End and Issue.

True Religion is afraid of none so much as the Ignorant and Blind; she desires not that any should impose upon themselves by Precipitancy and Rashness; but calls upon Sinners to examine her Offers, to search into the Beauty and Gain of Godliness, as what will engage them to break off their Iniquities by Repentance. Hence it is the earnest Desire of God that Sinners would not take hasty Measures, but deliberately think what will tend most to their own Happiness and Peace: And it is his Complaint that they do otherwise, *Deut. xxxii. 28, 29. For they are a Nation void of Counsel, neither is there any Understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter End!* *Isa. i. 3. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider:* And the Defect in this is assigned as the Rise of the Want of due Regard to God and his Laws in Men, *Eccles. v. 1. Keep thy Foot when thou goest into the House of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the Sacrifice of Fools; for they consider not that they do Evil.*

I shall, in discoursing upon this Subject, do these Things shortly.

1. I shall offer some Considerations to prove how reasonable it is for us to apply our selves to this Duty, *namely*, to meditate with Attention and Carefulness upon our Ways, to examine the Objects which we so eagerly pursue, and the Pleasures we are so fond of, to search diligently our whole Management, and consider what the End of all these Things will be, lest we be foolishly neglecting our only enduring Interest, and be rushing headlong upon Destruction and Death.

2^{dly}. I shall propose a few Directions in order to our thinking the more usefully upon our Ways, and with the less Hazard of being deceived in our Judgments about them.

Lastly. I shall mention a practical Inference or two from what shall be said.

1. This Duty of serious Consideration is so indisputably reasonable, that though it be seldom practised in a due manner; yet few will be so impudent and brutish as to deny that it ought to be otherwise. God hath given us rational Natures and Faculties whereby we are exalted above the Beasts that perish, by which we can discern Dangers afar off, and take Measures to prevent them; and can see a promised Land, look to a distant Happiness, and pursue these Ways that lead to it. It is Consideration which distinguisheth us from the brutish Part of the Creation, and elevated us higher than they who are under the Government of their Senses, and determined and guided by their Dictates; and can we think of so far degrading our Natures and debasing our selves as to become like them: Now, does not the easie Fool really so, who gives Credit to every alluring Temptation, and yields to its Embraces, without ever think-

thinking whether he may not be grasping devouring Fire into his Bosom, which will rage in his Bowels for ever, and be entering into the fatal Measures of his mortal Adversary. It is beyond doubt that Poison may be sweet in the Mouth, and gilded over so as not to be discerned till we lay it open and diligently examine it; and uninterrupted Experience, as well as the Nature of the Things, may convince us, that fair enough Offers may be made by a Project that will in the Event prove not only Vanity, but Misery and Death, that the Way which leads to Life may be narrow and rugged at the first View, while the Path that carries to Destruction is broad and pleasant: And, I am sure, the least we can do as Men, is not to embrace any Offers that are made us by the World, or the God of it the Devil, till we take some time to hear the Objections that lie against them; what can be more unworthy of a rational Soul, than, like our first Parent *Eve*, to eat the forbidden Fruit because it was *pleasant to the Eye*, and by its Outside *good for Food*, to be led captive by our Corruptions at their Pleasure, and, being kept in a constant Hurry and Discomposure of Mind by one vain Thought which succeeds to another, never to look about us, to see if we may not unawares be ensnared by the Enemy and kept in Bondage by him, while we hug our selves in our Chains, and know not that we are miserable? Besides, as our Spirits are immortal, their Happiness cannot consist in the Things that are temporal, the Allurements of a perishing World: Which makes it absolutely necessary for us, that we should not rest satisfied, and inconsiderately take up with what may please us for a Season, without examining

ing the Influence that it has upon the endless Ages; and our Condition then. How shameful as well as dangerous should we account it to act with so little Reason and Judgment, and, through our whole Life, do what we would think foolish and unwise in any Person with respect to his lower and less valuable Concerns? And this especially, when we every Day see that this Earth is not our Habitation but the Way to another State, the most robust and vigorous yielding to the Stroke of Death, which cuts down some while in the Bloom of a flourishing Youth, or in old Age they certainly wither and shrink away: *Our Fathers where are they? And the Prophets do they live for ever?* Now, what Madness must it be to drop into the Grave, without ever having thought beforehand that all our Glory and Beauty, together with the numerous Vanities we so eagerly pursued, were to be laid low in the Dust, and moulder in that House appointed for all Living? The Consideration hereof ought to make every Person, who would act wisely, put the same Question to himself, with regard to the least Project he designs and each Step he takes, which God asks at the false Prophets, *Jer. v. 31. The Prophets prophesy falsely, and the Priests bear Rule by their Means, and my People love to have it so: And what will ye do in the End thereof?*

But in the second Place, as we should be moved to think upon our Ways, because Consideration is so intirely agreeable to the Nature of our Souls, and the neglecting it must be a Proof that we have abandoned Reason, and are Slaves to the inferior Appetires: So we should be powerfully engaged hereto by the vast Importance that it is of to our great:

greatest imaginable Concerns, what Way we are going in, and whither these Paths lead. If we had any Consideration hereof, how diffident would we be of what we do, and accurately notice every Step we make? It is something excusable in Men, to suffer themselves to be over-reached or disappointed through their Negligence and Inadvertency in any inconsiderable Trifle, in a Business of no great Moment, and a Loss which they can easily bear; and were our Souls to return unto the Womb of nothing, at the same Time these Tabernacles of Clay are dissolved, Mankind needed not vex themselves with the Fears of what were to come, give any Interruption to their present Enjoyments, or *mix Trembling with their Mirth*, they might, like the little Insects, sport away their short Lives in a warm Sun, and never think upon their Ways, because, at the worst, any temporal Evil that might have been prevented by their Watching and Meditation, could be of no great Moment, nor could a Mistake in their Management prove dangerous: But, alas. it is quite otherwise with us, *all our Ways are before the Eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all our Goings*, they lead to an Eternity, and by them we will either ascend unto the Tabernacle of God, to dwell in his holy Hill, or go down into the Sides of the bottomless Pit, and be at length irrecoverably plunged into that boundless Sea of Fire and of Brimstone. Death is the Gate into a World where *the Tree must infallibly ly as it falleth*, and then we are to be received into the Sanctuary of Immortality, and seated in the Mansions of Happiness and Honour, or thrust into the Prison of Shame and Torment, according to the Deeds done in the Body: And shall

we be thoughtless about Ways, upon which, so much, even our All, the Soul it self, solely depends? If we considered that every Step we take upon Earth, will either add to the Brightness of the Glory, and heighten that noble Joy, which the perfect and the upright Man shall dwell in the midst of; or increase the Violence of the furious Storm, wherein the Wicked shall be driven away at Death, and prove so much Fuel thrown into his Hell: Would not we have a careful Anxiety about all our Goings, and think it our Duty to examine the Tendency of each of them? A Person may inadvertently let some little counterfeit Money pass upon him, who yet may be industrious and diligent in his Business in the general; but how very a Mad-man would he be, that should rashly set his Hand to a Paper that might deprive him of his Estate and Life too, without so much as being at the Pains to read it? And is he not infinitely more a Fool, who takes not heed to the Choice he makes, when it is of such a Life or Death, which are set before him? We are, while in this Earth, either plucking Fruit from the Tree of Life, or sucking in Poison which will prove Rotteness to our Bones, and canker our Vitals: And how unreasonable is it then, to catch so greedily at every Appearance of Pleasure and Good, which endeavours to insinuate it self into our Affection and Esteem, while Hell and Death may be its dreadful Attendants to rush in with it? And how watchful a Guard ought we to keep over our Hearts and Lives, when so very much depends upon them?

But further, we are not to look upon our selves as if we had the Disposal of our own Condition, and

and could be happy or run away from Misery without the Assistance of another: No, we stand in a Relation to a God who is higher than the Heavens, and the Sceptre of whose Empire equally directs and governs through every Part of the Creation; and since these Ways of ours are far from being indifferent to him, and consequently they must be of the utmost Concern to all his Creatures, according as we walk we are happy and safe in a Friendship which Hell and all its Devils can never deprive us of, and have a Title to the Protection of an everlasting Arm always underneath us, or we make him our enraged Enemy, to pursue us with Destruction, and to glory in our Calamities, and to laugh when our Fear cometh: What amazing Stupidity? How inexcusable Sloth must it then be, not to think upon these Ways? Our Saviour lays it down as indisputable, *Luke xiv. 31.* that a King, in any tolerable Measure wise, will not rashly engage in a War, or carelessly provoke an Enemy, but will deliberately consider his own Strength, and see *whether he be able with Ten thousand to meet him who cometh against him with Twenty Thousand?* Now, how incomparably greater Reason have we not to move on in a Way, till we know if we shall therein meet with God as an Enemy, and run upon the thick Bosses of his Bucklers? Unthinking Sinner! dost thou look up to the Heavens which his Fingers have made, and which he can as easily shake into Pieces as he now sustains and preserves them? Canst thou view the Sun, that vast Mass of Fire, by letting fall a few Drops from which he can kindle this Earth into a Flame, and consume it together with its Inhabitants? And shouldst not thou diligently think

whether thou be walking in the Path of Life that leads to his Favour, or stupidly provoking him to Anger, and running in the Paths of Enmity and Disobedience? How justly does God himself move Sinners to this Duty from the Consideration of his Terrors? *Psal. l. 21, 22. These Things hast thou done, and I kept Silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self: But I will reprove thee, and set them in Order before thine Eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver. And as it is Isa. xlv. 9. Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker: Let the Potter strive with the Potter of the Earth; shall the Clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy Work, he hath no Hands?* In a Word, though Reason, and, which is a far brighter Light, the Revelation of Christ, did not assure of these important, these inconceivably momentous Consequences, of the Ways we are walking in, and how much depends upon them, the very Possibility of such awful Truths might, I think, make us tremble every Step we take, and should certainly engage us often to reflect upon our Life in the World, and, with the Psalmist, to *think upon our Ways*. But,

3dly. Another very strong Argument for Diligence and Constancy in this Duty, ariseth from a Consideration of the Circumstances we are placed in, *namely*, that we are surrounded with Errors and Deceits; and how easily we are cheated by them, without a serious examining of our Ways, and a being ever upon our Guard. We are in a World that is filled with Temptations to Sin, and crooked Paths are every where scattered through it, which yet look straight and fair till we approach

proach nearer and come towards the End of them. What a Crowd of various Lusts and Pleasures throng in upon the Soul, all of them in Disguise ; and an artful Devil varnishing over the Bitterness and Poison of them, whereby they smoothly slide down, and are rolled under the Tongue as a sweet and delicious Morfel? Satan is an experienced Adversary, and learned in all the Arts of Guile and Subtilty ; he can cover with the fairest Pretences to Advantage and Gain, what in the mean time he is designing to ruine the Soul by, and is improving to its irrecoverable Loss : How vastly different does he make his Allurements appear, when they caress and flatter the Soul, from what they will be, when in the End they shall each of them hatch a Cockatrice, and a fiery flying Serpent to sting the Sinner eternally who indulged himself in them? The Mirth and Jollity of unthinking Mad-men, the Excesses of Riot wherein the vicious wallow, and the false Security and Calm of an ungodly seared Conscience, shine during the Night of Error with enough of Brightness, to make them pleasing to the carnal Mind : The Gains of Oppression and Fraud, the Riches and Honours which may be the Purchase of Treachery and Wickedness, are so coloured over by Satan, that it is difficult to discover the Blemishes, and find out the lurking Viper, or the dead Flic which will poison and spoil these empty fading Joys ; yea, so far will he beguile oftentimes the Soul, as to make it fancy that it is walking in a quite contrary Road to the real one, and that it is moving towards Heaven and Happiness, while it is in Truth running with all its Might into Hell. Now, the Consideration of these Things calls with a loud Voice upon us

to keep our Hearts with all keeping, and readily comply with the Apostle's Exhortation, *Heb. iii. 12, 13.* Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God: But exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.

Glorified Spirits in Heaven, that happy Place where there is no Tempter, nor any Thing that can occasion Wandering, where all Clouds are eternally banished by the Light of God and of the Lamb, need not, at least in the same manner, as in our Text, think upon their Ways; because they ever ly clearly open before them, and while running to do the Pleasure of the great King, they easily read their Duty and see their Interest: But we upon the Earth are like Travellers surrounded by a thick Mist, in continual Danger of mistaking our Way; beside that, the Road to Happiness is but one, and that so confined, that by departing but a little either to the right or left Hand, we are ready to sink into a Marish, or tumble headlong down a Precipice; and therefore surely we must be very unwise, rashly to venture forward in the dark, and run on without thinking upon our Ways that are so full of Hazards. It might be excusable in the Master of a Ship, when in an open Sea where there is no Danger of lurking Rocks to split it, not to be so solicitous about every small Direction he gives his Vessel, and so anxiously careful how he steers the Rudder; but would it not be the Extreme of Folly, in a narrow tempestuous Sea, full of Rocks and Shelves every where scattered, to behave the same way then, and not to be at some more Pains that he be not shipwrecked?

Now

Now what is this World but a boisterous raging Ocean, where every Thing carries the utmost Danger to the Soul ; and where so many have made *Shipwreck of the Faith*, for one that hath been safely landed in the Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace ? Now, if we would act like Men, and agreeable to any Measure of Reason, can we think it fit in such Circumstances to divert and amuse ourselves with Toys, empty Babbles that are only suitable for Children, to wander from one Pleasure to another, and drive away Thought and Care while we enjoy Health and Prosperity, without so much as looking out where we are, or enquiring once at our selves what will be the End of these Things ?

The very Atheist himself, if he be not utterly deprived of any small Remains even of his carnal Reason, will acknowledge, that, in many Things, we are soon imposed upon, and are filled with Passions and Prejudices : And, I am sure, this should enforce the Argument, that we may take the more diligent Pains in *thinking upon our Ways*, the far most numerous Part of Mankind are led by Fancy, and are really in a Dream, the Entertainments and Pleasures of which are altogether imaginary : And is it not just, that we should strive to awaken ourselves while it is yet Time, and do the Work of the Day, lest we be as *the hungry Man*, Isa. xxix. 8. *who dreameth, and behold, he eateth ; but be awaketh, and his Soul is empty ?*

And to conclude this Argument, when, by *our Ways*, in the Text, we are to understand our whole Management, and every Circumstance of it; our Projects, Desires and Inclinations, the many Pretenders to our Hearts, such Things as easily prevail upon us, and which have the greatest In-

fluence on our Actions: We should consider that we are all in an Enemy's Country, in the Midst of the Legions of Darkness; and this sure should make us extremely cautious, and move us to examine every Thing with the most critical Exactness, however loud Pretences it may make to be our Friend, and that it comes to be subservient to our Joy and Peace. This is the wisest and safest Course for such that are walking in a *Lebanon*, which, however charming it may be, is nevertheless filled with *Dens of Lions and Mountains of Leopards*.

4thly. We may consider, to this Purpose, the dreadful State of impenitent thoughtless Sinners, and how much the Torment of such will be increased beyond that of others: For beside the heavy Punishment which God, the just Judge, will inflict upon such a Contempt of his powerful Vengeance, it being the greatest Indignity we can well suppose possible to be done to it, not so much as to think it worthy of a Regard, to dread his Anger, or value his Favour so little, as not to think upon these Ways, which according as they are agreeable to his Laws, or contrary to them, entitle to his Friendship, or expose to his Rage: I say, beside this, there is a Punishment which naturally follows from the Stupidity of the Transgressor, and is necessarily included in the Nature of the Thing. A seared Conscience, that never reproached the Man for his Folly and Disobedience, or put him upon enquiring into his State, will in Hell be torn open with the greater Violence; and the Soul must endure the more terrible Convulsions, when all its Crimes shall be set in order before it, without a Possibility of its diverting these awful and tormenting Thoughts for so much as one Moment, by the

Vanities of this sinful Life, wherewith it kept it self busy when it might have thought upon them to better Purpose : The less that he considers his Ways now, the more torturing will the Horrors of them be, when God will force them in upon the Soul by his almighty irresistible Power. O how inconceivable will be the Agony of the Fright and Surprise, that an unthinking Sinner shall be amazed with, who sported away his Days in Pleasure and Mirth, and never had a serious Thought of his latter End, when he shall drop into Hell, and never be awakened into Consideration, till the Flames of that unquenchable Fire pierce into every Part of him, and, by the Fulness of Torment, leave no Place any more for Stupidity and Unconcernedness ? It is true, all who are condemned to be Inhabitants of that miserable Prison will be filled with Wrath to the uttermost, and nothing shall be there but Sorrow and Wo : Yet there will be a peculiar Torture flowing from the infinitely different Views of Things, that the thoughtless Sinner shall then have : And the Terrors of the first Astonishment upon his falling into the bottomless Pit, will never lessen or leave him, or be at all weakened by his Continuance there to Eternity ; but the peculiar racking Pains of a Soul, roused up from a pleasant deceitful Dream, and a false Calm, and thrown into the Abyss of Darkness and Misery, will uninterruptedly attend the Sinner who does not now think upon his Ways. But,

5thly. The many and great Advantages which must follow upon a serious Consideration of our Ways, ought to excite us to this Duty : And this Argument may indeed be very plain to People of whatsoever Disposition. The Atheist himself, who

who ridicules the important Concerns of another World, and imagines such credulous and easy who give any Belief to them, I should think, might find his Account in examining into his Principles and Practice: For if there will be Ground, found upon a Search, for his Opinions, and if they can abide the Test of Reason and Enquiry, then, sure, he may with the more Ease and Quiet indulge himself in all his Pleasures, and abandon Religion and the Service of God, without these disturbing Fears and anxious Thoughts which often break in upon the Security of the most hardned Infidel; but whence such a Person's shunning to enquire into his Ways flows, is certain from our Saviour's Reasoning, *John iii. 20, 21. For every one that doth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd: But he that doth Truth cometh to the Light, that his Deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* In short, if a Person be walking in the Ways of Righteousness and Truth, if he be really taking such Measures as will at length issue in his own true Interest and Honour, thinking upon them cannot miss to heighten his Pleasure, arising from the Sense of his having made a wise and good Choice, and must quiet and calm the Mind, and afford it the greater Satisfaction; and the deeper we go, the more lasting Contentment will arise to us: But if, on the other hand, our Passions and Prejudices have clouded the Understanding, and any Lusts have got Dominion over us; if we, instead of moving to eternal Happiness, be rather running farther from it, then certainly, there can be nothing more reasonable than to examine ourselves and our Ways,

as being the only Method left to prevent our utter Ruin.

You see then, thinking upon our Ways, if we be in the true Road that leads to Life, cannot fail of spreading Joy and Contentment over the Soul, and it will animate us with the greater Cheerfulness to run vigorously on in these happy Paths; the Sense of our blessed State will bear us up under all Discouragements, and prevent Weariness or Languishing: And if, on the other hand, we be really approaching to the Gates of eternal Death, and be ready to drop into the bottomless Pit whenever God cuts the Thread of our Life, tho' the Knowledge of this may affect us with Pain, and disquiet our carnal Security; yet he must be a mad Man, who does not think it vastly better to be awakned out of his Dream, when it may be a Mean of his getting free of that miserable State, than to enjoy a little longer Continuance of Ease and deceiving Peace, to end in an irrecoverable as well as infinitely momentous Loss. It may be acknowledged, that Persons who are beyond Hope of Remedy, and condemned to eternal Despair, would do wisely, if it were in their Power, not to think upon their Ways: But, to conclude this Head, *blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, it is otherwise with us, who have yet Access unto the Grace wherein we stand; there is Hope in a merciful God and a mighty Saviour, if we will but think upon our Ways, and turn from such of them as are at the same Time unrighteous and destructive to our selves, unto the Lord who hath Abundance of Compassion, and plenteous Redemption in Store for every penitent Transgressor: He hath seen the Ways of such, and will heal them.

When

When we hear such a joyful Voice from God, as that is *Jer. iii. 22. Return, ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your Backslidings,* if we do not with *Israel* immediately answer, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God,* we ought at least to examine our Life, and put it to the Trial, and see if it will not be our wisest Course to choose the Lord for our God, and make his Statutes our constant Counsellors in all our Ways. I shall only mention upon this Head, in the

Sixth Place, that a thoughtless Sinner is really more sottish and brutish than the Beasts which perish. These are under the Government of their Senses, and God hath endued them with such a Measure thereof, that they can by them distinguish betwixt the Food that is designed for the Nourishment, and the noxious Herbs which are poisonable and would prove fatal to them; nor do they rashly counteract the Dictates of their Nature: But Man, whom God hath exalted to a nobler Life, and whose Senses were never designed to govern but to obey his Reason, rolls Poison and Death under his Tongue as a sweet Morsel, and is not at the Labour of thinking that it will prove bitter in the Belly. Such a lazy effeminate Person may go to the Beasts of the Field, and blush at their Example, which sufficiently reprove his stupid Sloth; yea, they provide for the Time to come and an approaching Storm, whereas he never looketh at what is to follow after: It is a very natural Punishment, as well as a reasonable Advice, mentioned to such by the wise Man, *Prov. vi. 6, &c. Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise, which having no Guide, Overseer, or Ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest.*
How

How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy Sleep? Yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little Folding of the Hands to Sleep. So shall thy Poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy Want as an armed Man. And, I am sure, it is worth our while, to enquire into the Matter if this present Time be not our Season, wherein we either sow to the Flesh, and shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; or sow to the Spirit, and shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting.

The second Thing proposed, was to offer a few Directions in order to our *thinking upon our Ways* more usefully, and with the less Hazard of being deceived in our Judgment about them.

1. We must apply ourselves to this Work with all the Seriousness and Concern we are capable of, else we do not properly think, but rather divert and amuse our selves by thus reflecting on our Ways. We must retire our Thoughts from the Noise and Hurry of the World, and the Levity of an unsettled Mind, and fix them upon this Enquiry with the deepest Attention, and must have all the Powers of our Soul upon the Stretch to discern the Good from the Evil. We must be as Persons that are not only searching for a Truth, the Knowledge whereof might be an Ornament and Advantage, but for such as are absolutely necessary; and what can be more reasonable, if we take a View either of the Consequence of this Enquiry, or of the great Difficulty there is in thinking aright upon this Subject? These Ways of ours are our eternal All, and contain in them every Thing that is valuable to us; for, if there be a Heaven and a Happiness to be enjoyed in it, that will be larger than all our Wishes, and fill us with as much Pleasure

sure as we can hold, we shall certainly lose the Prize, and never be Partaker of it, except, at least, we think upon our Ways: And if Death ushers in a Judgment to come, and hath Hell following it, where Tribulation, Anguish and Sorrow shall be poured upon every Soul which doth evil, we shall as certainly be thrust into that dreadful Place, and become Partakers of its Plagues with the other Inhabitants thereof. If we be now wandering in the crooked Paths which lead to it, we should constantly bear these Things home upon our Soul, which would rouse up our lazy and negligent Dispositions, and prevent our being so easily imposed upon and cheated by false Appearances. What Time can we possibly bestow better, than that which is spent in such an Employment? And can we ever toil and labour to more Purpose, than in examining the Nature of our Desires and Designs, and in an Enquiry into what will be the End of all our Labours? And, I am sure, if our Care about any Thing ought to be proportioned to the Moment and Weight of it, all our Diligence, and our utmost Endeavours should be applied in this Work, which is of the incomprehensibly greatest Importance: And the Life of a thoughtless Sinner is very fitly in Scripture compared to a *Dream*, being as vain, and to as little Purpose: But, alas, the Effects are quite different, for in a Vision of the Night, all the Danger is the failing of an imaginary Pleasure, which leaves us when we awake; but our Management upon Earth, if we mind not our great Business, tho' a Dream, yet irreversibly determines our eternal State, whether happy or miserable, and is to take effect for ever in the other World. Let us then think upon our Ways diligently

ly and resolutely, so as not to be diverted from our Enquiry, by the many Pretences for the Reasonableness of a Delay which the Devil will make Use of, and lay before us for that end: And as this Knowledge of our Ways is the principal Thing, we ought to seek after it till we attain it, and *with all our getting to get this Understanding.*

2dly. We should think upon our Ways with the strictest Impartiality and Unbyassedness, otherwise we will be but the more confirmed in our Folly, and heighten our Danger. By an Examination of them, we may easily take Notice how far oft-times we are hurried from Truth by our Passions, and with what Violence; and what a mighty Dominion Self-love, and an Inclination to present Enjoyments, have over our Understanding, and how many Clouds of this Kind hover about us, and, sure, these are very ill Judges in this Matter: We must therefore, in this Enquiry, be as far elevated above our Senses as we can, and be little moved by what pleases our vitiated Palates for the present Time; but consider Things as they really are in themselves, and will be found to be in the Issue. And as we know that there is an Enemy, the utmost of whose hellish Satisfaction is to ruine us and promote our Misery, who is active and vigilant, and wants neither Cunning nor Diligence, and that he is particularly employed in blinding the Minds of them who believe not, and giving them false Representations of Things: This should make us double our Care that we be not imposed upon by his crafty Arts; yea, we should be cautious of trusting our own Hearts, and rather suspect that we are immoderately fond of that Way of living we have hitherto followed, and are therefore
pre-

prejudiced in its Favour, and rendered deaf against the Voice of Truth when opposing it. Let us therefore work out this Work with Diffidence of our selves, and mix it with Fear and Trembling.

3dly. Constancy and Frequency in our Meditation are necessary in order to its tending unto any valuable Purposes. When this Duty is but seldom performed, and long Intervals are found betwixt the Times of doing it, Thousands of Errors may insensibly steal in upon us before we reflect on our Conduct, and the Discovery of them will still become more and more difficult. We are surrounded by many Temptations of all Sorts to draw us out of the right Way, and it requires unwearied Application to preserve our selves from being prevailed upon by them. The Road to Happiness has every where innumerable By-paths lying near it, into which we are too ready to step aside, which makes it necessary, almost every Moment of our Lives, to be able to say anon, with the Psalmist in the Text, *I thought upon my Ways.*

I shall propose two or three other Things, which may be of Use to us in making a right Choice of the Pretenders to our Love and Esteem, and in fixing our Hearts, our Desires and Endeavours upon suitable Objects.

1. Let us not only consider the Appearance that any Thing has at present in our Eyes, and the seeming Satisfaction it may afford us for some little Time; but enlarge our Views, and take a Prospect of it as related to immortal Spirits that shall remain for evermore, and are now united to frail weak Bodies which possess only the Vapour of a Life that is easily blown away. Would we
but

but think reasonably, our short Duration in this World is so soon at an End, that our Condition in it needs not engross much Time and Care; our Pleasures or Troubles in it last but for a Moment, and are then swallowed up and forgotten in Death and Eternity; and therefore it ought to be the least Part of our Enquiry into the Ways we walk in, and the Methods we pursue, whether they tend to our Ease and Happiness in a fleeting World, that flieth away as a Dream; and is no more to be found than a Vision of the Night: And, yet, alas, this is the deceitful Measure which thoughtless Sinners direct their Management by.

The Ambitious should not look upon the Paths of temporal Grandeur and Greatness, as they are painted out by a lively Imagination, and adorned with a Number of false Beauties which generally vanish away upon an Approach to them; nor make an Estimate of the Worth and Excellency of a Kingdom and Throne, as 'tis surrounded by a Crowd of servile Flatterers, and looks with Gayety and Splendor enough to promise Satisfaction and Fulness of Pleasure to the Person who sits upon it: No, it is the wiser Course, to think upon the End of Things, and take a View of Crowns and Sceptres as they are laid low in the Dust and hid in the Grave, to behold the Ashes of a Tyrant mingled with the Earth common to that of his vilest Slave, when the Conqueror of Nations shall become weak and contemptible as others, his Pomp brought down to the Grave and the Noise of his Viols. What a different View would this give us of the Objects of ambitious

bitious Wishes, from what an inconsiderate Prospect of them yields? How would it put Bounds to our aspiring Humours, and curb and restrain the extravagant Thirst for Greatness, the Endeavours after which compose the whole Ways of a great many of the unthinking Number of Mankind?

The covetous Man, who esteems a Heap of Treasure the highest Good, and makes the Ways which lead to Riches his Choice, who bows to that Idol, and worships Mammon as his principal God; when he thinks upon his Ways, should not look into his Coffers on which he so fondly dotes, and admire the Gold which dazzles him: But cast abroad his Eyes into the World, and behold how *they take Wings and fly away*, and how many innumerable Accidents can tumble from an Affluence of Fortune to the lowest Ebb of Poverty and Contempt, him who a little before boasted in the Greatness of his Wealth: And he ought to think seriously, if Riches profit in the Day of Death; that *they that trust in their Wealth, and boast themselves of the Multitude of their Riches, none of them can by any Means redeem his Brother, nor give to God a Ransom for him.*

In short, when we are thinking upon the Luxury, the Mirth and Jollity, the various Entertainments of the Mind, and any Allurements, of whatever Sort, which the World offers and we may incline to embrace; let us compare them with our Estate at the great Change, and see what Fruit they will produce, when the Earth shall tremble under our Feet, and flee from our Embraces, and with it all these Vanities and Amuse-

amusements perish for ever: This, I am sure, is the wisest Course, and very reasonable; since it is what we will not be able to help, Experience, and our very Senses, convincing us that there can be no Discharge from this War.

THE
SERIES

were to be displayed in the brightest manner
an eternal Tribute of Praise to God
who are washed in the blood of the Lamb



SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS II. 8. *For by Grace are ye
saved, through Faith, and that not of
your selves, it is the Gift of God.*

WHEN the Saviour of Mankind
was born into our World, and
tabernacled amongst Men, the
glorious Ministers of the divine
Pleasures proclaimed, with the
Majesty that became the Mes-
sage, that the Child now hid in a
Manger was Christ the Lord: The Multitude of the
celestial Hosts, who with Diligence and Delight
search into the Mystry of Redemption, celebrated
the divine Perfections which were to be so glor-
iously manifested in the Redeemer, and they give
us a noble Sum of the Result of his Work, *Glory to
God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will to-
wards Men:* The divine Honour and Amiability
were

were to be displayed in the brightest Manner, and an eternal Tribute of Praise to flow from these who are washed in the Blood of the Lamb, and made Kings and Priests unto his Father; whereas all the Part Men were to have in it, was to be Objects of the divine Good-will, but not to partake of the least Share of the Glory, tho' they enjoyed the whole Advantage. Hence all the Circumstances of Transgressors, their Nature, Inclinations Knowledge and Powers, or rather Want of them, were admirably calculated to advance and illustrate the divine Excellencies, and to debase Man.

The Glory of infinite Understanding, unbounded Power, and universal Goodness, were demonstrated by a thousand Witnesses, which this noble Machine the World, wherein there are so many Arguments of Might and Wisdom, and which those more exalted Orders of Beings, immortal Spirits, do so plentifully furnish for this Purpose; but Mercy lay concealed in the Knowledge of God, till Misery gave an Opportunity for its Display: Hence it is the Design of the Gospel of Christ and of the whole Management of the Son of God in making Sinners happy, to exalt the Honour and discover the Perfection of this Excellency. Eph. i. 5, 6. he predestinated us unto the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good Pleasure of his Will, to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace. And it must be certain, that this End is fully gained, and the Riches of this Grace made manifest in the Saints, if it be true, which the Apostle asserts, in the Words now read, that by Grace they are saved.

This Text makes Mention, 1. Of the Happiness and Bliss of the Persons our Apostle here speaks to, *Salvation*.

2dly. Of the Source and Spring, or the Cause of the excellent State they were advanced to, *Grace: By Grace are ye saved.*

Commentators do not agree in the Meaning and Extent of the *Salvation* mentioned here, but explain it so differently, as to give intirely disagreeing Views of the Design of this Passage in general. I shall endeavour to lay open the Arguings upon this Head, and examine them, so far as is necessary for the Purposes of a practical Discourse * in doing these two Things, 1. By proposing the Sentiments of *Hammond*, *Whitby*, and the greatest Part of those who are addicted to the Sentiments of the Remonstrants, 2dly. I shall endeavour to shew the Weakness of what they bring for proving their Opinion, and then give what I take to be a juster Notion of this *Salvation*.

1. They tell us that *Paul* is here writing to *Gentiles*, who, before the Light of the Gospel shone upon them, were in a State of Idolatry and Superstition; and that to this blind ignorant Condition of theirs, he opposes the State of Light they were brought to by the Revelation of the Doctrine of *Christ*; and they carry the Matter no further. Agreeably to this Scheme, they apply *dead in Trespases and Sins*, &c. to these who were in an ignorant State of Heathenism, and subjected to the Prince of the Power of the Air, for they worshipped and paid Homage to the Demons, who, according to the *Gentile* Theology, were the most numerous Inhabitants of that Region; without taking No-

* This Discourse was that Part of his Trial before the Presbytery of *Edinburgh*, which is commonly called, the *Popular Sermon* August 18. 1714.

tice of the natural Corruption of Sinners, and that Empire whereby the Devil, tho' more subtilly, yet no less powerfully, tyrannizes over all such as are not born of the Spirit. As a Consequence of this, they extend the *Salvation*, which the Apostle so much celebrates in this Chapter, no further than a Change of these outward Circumstances to the better, by a Sufficiency of Means to discover the Vanity of the heathen Divinity, and instruct them in the Doctrine of Christ.

We may then take their Paraphrase of our Text in the Words of a learned Gentleman, who has deserved very well of the World by his Writings of another Nature. *We are saved by Grace through Faith, that is, faith he, ye are put into a Method and State of Safety and Salvation, by Means of your receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and it is his own Act, his mere Mercy, that you have Terms of Acceptance offered you upon your believing in Christ: Wherefore, as Whitby tells us, the Word saved doth not signify the final and complete Salvation which we shall enjoy in Heaven, but only our being placed in the Way of Salvation, and put into that Estate, in which, if we go on, we shall undoubtedly be saved: To support this Paraphrase, he says, that such is the evident Meaning of the Word σωτηρια in other Places, as Luke xix. 9. Christ speaking to Zaccheus, this Day is Salvation come to thy House: οὗτοστιν οὗτος, that is, says he, Jesus Christ the great Author and Mean of Salvation. I shall not name any other Places he quotes, for it may be easily granted, that the Word here translated *Salvation*, does not always signify immortal Bliss; but that Freedom from any Degree of Misery, and the Means of Happiness, may be expressed thereby: All we seek, is only that this Word may be taken some-*

times, without any Violence done it, for consummate Felicity, which can be doubted by none who reads, that *the End of our Faith is the Salvation of our Souls.*

2dly, They urge, that the Persons, to whom the Apostle writes, were yet in the Body, in Houses of Clay, and therefore when he says *you are saved*, he cannot mean that they were advanced to a State beyond this World, where they are clothed with a State of Incorruption. But only that they had the Light of the Gospel, and were freed from the Darkness of Paganism.

Two easy Answers may be returned to this: 1. Though the Apostle did not here assert that they were either actually saved, or ever would be so, yet his Proposition would be true, that Salvation in all who attain it, is owing entirely to Grace. For his Design here is to celebrate the divine Mercy which is the Source of the Happiness of Sinners, and not to assert the Salvation of the Ephesians in particular.

But, 2dly. It is evident that, according to the Scripture Dialect, that State is attributed to Persons which they are in the Way to, and will certainly arrive at. Thus the Apostle, *as Partner*, calls himself a *Partaker of the Glory that shall here reveal*; in like manner they may be said in our Text to be *saved*, in whom God having begun a good Work, would carry it on to Perfection. We may take Notice upon this Head, that the Scriptures being designed not only to convert Sinners unto God, but to build up the Saints, the apostolical Epistles are oft-times directed to such as were supposed to be really Christians, and not in Profession only, who were washed and sanctified by the Blood of Jesus;

so that it cannot favour the *Arminian* Sense of our Text, that the Apostle speaks to all the *Ephesians* as those who were in this State of Salvation.

Having shewn that the Sentiments of these learned Men are not supported with just Reasons, I take the *Salvation* we are enquiring about, in a nobler and more elevated Signification, as expressing that excellent Happiness which the Followers of the Redeemer have a Hope of, and are advanced unto, when *Death* is swallowed up in *Victory*, and they, *having put on Immortality*, are ever with the Lord. Now, that this is the Apostle's Meaning, will appear from the following Considerations.

It is an unerring Rule, that we should take every Word in that Sense of it, in which it conduces most to the Writer's Design, provided we do not wire-draw it from its natural Signification. Now, all own that the Apostle intends to magnify the Grace of God, from the glorious Effects of it towards the *Ephesians*; and, tho' we grant that this was manifested enough to raise their highest Gratitude to God, by the external Call of the Gospel, and their being saved from heathenish Darkness, yet, I am sure, it is much more illustrated, and the Benefit is far greater, if they were thereby engaged to the Ways of Life, and at length possessed of it. So that the Apostle's Scope is gained by our Explication of the Words beyond the *Arminian* one; as far as true Holiness and Bliss are beyond the Possibility of attaining to them, and doing the Will of God, is preferable to external Means afforded us to be instructed in it.
 2dly. The Persons here spoke of are said to be saved by Faith. Now, this must include more than that the Gospel was preached to them, and that they

they had Access to its Light, because many, in these Circumstances, neglect the Means of Grace, and never have Faith.

3dly. The Apostle proves and illustrates, that they were saved by Grace, by attributing to them those Qualities and Endowments which were peculiar to true Believers, who had a Title to the Glory to be revealed: Ver. 10. *For we are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works: They were made nigh by the Blood of Christ,* Ver. 13. *And were builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit,* Ver. 22. Now can we be so fanciful as to imagine, that when he says such Persons are saved, he designs no more but that they had the Revelation of God's Will, without considering their Improvement or Neglect of it.

Lastly. It is a good Observation of some learned Men, that the Apostle frequently changes the Pronoun *you*; and uses *we*, thereby including himself; which seems to be a Proof that he is opposing natural Corruption to Regeneration, and not a State of Paganism to a Profession of Christianity: Since himself was a Jew, and never a Heathen. I have said enough to fix the Extent of the first Part of the Text, *ye are saved*.

The second Thing in the Words was the Source and Spring, or the Cause of that excellent State they were advanced to, *Grace, by Grace ye are saved*.

This Word *grace*, is used to express the Gospel, whereby the Mystery and Riches of Grace are revealed, *Ti. ii. 11, 12. The Grace of God teacheth us to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*; it is also obvious that it frequently signifies the Gifts and Operations of God upon Souls, *Grace be with*

you all is an usual Expression: But in neither of these Meanings are we to take the Word in our Text, since he is here shewing the Freedom of God's Mercy, to which Design neither of these conduce. But in the New Testament *Grace* ordinarily holds out the free unmerited Favour of God in opposition to Works and Desert, and this, as eminently displayed in the recovering of Man by Jesus Christ, from that State of Sin and Misery the Fall plunged him into: And this is the *Grace* whereby in the Text we are said to be *saved*.

I might now offer some Things conducing to give us a right Idea of *Grace*, as distinguished from Goodness; but this may be easier and more properly brought in when discoursing from the Doctrine: Wherefore I shall now sum up what I have said in a short Paraphrase of the Text, which may also serve for the practical Observation I design to insist upon.

Ye are saved by Grace. You *Ephesians*, who were once dead in *Trespases and Sins*, are now quickned to a spiritual Life, and raised up, and set down together in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus: But it will be the greatest Folly to conclude thence, that ye have the least Ground for Boasting and Vanity, as if ye had any Share in this happy Change of your State; for your eternal Salvation and immortal Felicity, in all its Parts and Circumstances, from its first Source and Spring to the finishing Stroke given it in Heaven, flows from nothing in Man that could engage God to bestow it upon him, but is solely and intirely owing to his unbounded Love and Mercy, For by *Grace* ye are *saved*, not of *Works*, lest any Man should boast.

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I shall endeavour to perform what is incumbent upon me in the Management of this Text by doing these three Things;

1. I shall give a short View of the *Salvation* here mentioned.

2. I shall apply myself to evince, from several Instances, that this Happiness of Sinners is wholly owing to Grace.

3. We shall propose a few of the many practical Inferences which may be deduced from this important Doctrine.

As to the first, I do not purpose to give anywise a large Account of the *Fountain of Pleasures*, which is at God's right Hand for evermore, even so far as the Scripture makes known to us that excellent Glory; since that, by it self, would require far more Time than is allowed for this Exercise, nor is it the direct Intendment of the Text. All I design, is to remark a few Things, which will conduce to demonstrate the Apostle's Assertion, that *this Salvation is by Grace*. We cannot have a better Notion of it, than by first taking a View of the *Misery* we are freed from.

All the Race of *Adam* is by Nature plunged into the deepest Abyss of Sin and Misery; despoiled of the Charms of Innocence and every Ornament which beautifies a reasonable Soul. A blinded deluding Understanding precipitates him to the Extreme of Folly; and is a false Glass, which represents Objects in a quite different View from what they really are. Hence he catches at a Phantom, and pursues a Shadow, while he contemns what he is ignorant of, undeceiving Joy. Man is captivated with the Paint and Varnish of Happiness, and is not allured by the Amiableness of the great-
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est Good and highest Perfection: Thus he neglects his true Interest, and embraces devouring Flames in his Bosom, and is running into a State where he shall be undeceived only that he may feel his Misery: And, as our Saviour tells us, *if the Eye be evil, the whole Body is Darkness*; so the Will, Affections and Inclinations of Men, are the genuin Product of a stupidly deceived Mind. How debased are Sinners! a Spirit that was created to Immortality and Life, which might have aspired to the most elevated Enjoyments, and been ever with the Father of Spirits, that Fountain of Light and Life, is paddling in the Mire of Sense, and basely sneaking after the most disgraceful Pleasures that are infinitely below its Pursuit, and never rises higher than contemptible Matter, which chains it down to its fatal Embraces: He is weak and obstinate, humours himself in his Folly, and has no Power to retrieve his most valuable Concerns: From the Womb we are dead in Sin; and Vice is not like a small Stream, which loses its Water when at a Distance from its Spring, but like a River, where new Sources of Crimes increase the Stream, and make the Torrent the more impetuous, till it is hurried into an unfathomable Ocean of Sin and Corruption: And, which will augment the Shame and Confusion of the Damned, we dream that we are happy, and sport our selves unto Dearthly and do not awake till we are oppressed with the Weight of eternal Torments; but we hug our Chains and imagine them Ornaments, and, which consummates our Misery, our Maker is our Enemy; and who can comprehend his Power? Have we an Arm like God? Or can we thunder with a Voice like his, and maintain a War with infinite

finite Might? Is there any resisting his Armies, or escaping his Knowledge? Can our Hands be strong, or our Hearts endure? No, the most obstinate in Hell will not be able to imagine their Souls into the lowest Degree of Ease, nor harden themselves by the highest Efforts of stoical Insensibility. Thus all the Business of Man, by Nature, is to heat Hell to consume him for ever: He lives to his Torments, and dies to complete them.

O the infinite guilty Misery of Sinners! and the incomprehensible Grace of God in delivering them from it! Methinks the bare Consideration of our Misery and the Mercy of God, might, without stopping, engage us to exclaim *by Grace we are saved*: For how beautiful is the Change made upon a Soul by this Salvation, when the Spirit of God enlightens it by the Gospel shining into it? The Saint is enabled to make a Judgment of the Pretenders to his Love and Pursuit, according to their real Merit; and no more prefers the fading Amusements of Time to the Certainties of Eternity, but, with the Eye of Faith, looks into the invisible World and the Glory of it, and is no more ensnared by the Devices of Satan to prostitute the immortal Spirit to the Pleasures of the Body: His Will moves to God the highest Good, and the only Object worthy of our supreme Love, and is not debauched from him by the Enticings of Sin: In short, he acts for his true Interest, suitably to the Dignity of his Nature, and is *prepared more and more for the Inheritance of the Saints which is in Light*; thus he lives and dies to be made holy and blessed. O happy State! which can only be comprehended by Enjoyment, when no Cloud shall overshadow the Understanding, no Lusts rebel against the holy Will,

Will, but he shall ever enjoy an undisturbed, calm and divine Serenity: Where all the Allays of Bliss, and the Imperfections of this World, are eternally banished: How satisfying will be their Knowledge, when, with an enlarged Capacity, they shall admire infinite Understanding shining in the now darkest Paths of God, and take a View of the Glory that accrues to him from every Part of his Ways and Works; and shall be ravished with the higher Delight, the more they discover the Excellencies of that God who is all to them, they being swallowed up by the Love of him? How glorious must be a *spiritual Body*, that shall never be a Clog to heavenly Desires, but, pure like the Air it breathes in, shall greaten the Satisfaction and Happiness of the Soul united to it? O blessed beyond our Thought, that Society, where God and the Redeemer are the Light, the Temple, the Centre of Union and Love, where there is no Anxiety from Fear of diminished Bliss; but all the Members of it are overflowed with Joy, when they know they shall be *ever with the Lord*, and their Union to him as stable as the divine Power and Faithfulness.

Thus I have given a very short Hint of this Salvation. He must certainly be ignorant of himself, and unworthy of it, who can attribute the least Share in attaining it to his own Powers.

The *second* Thing proposed, is to evince that this Happiness of Sinners is intirely owing to *Grace*: Which will be evident if we consider,

1. The Source and Spring of all this Design: The Decree of God, and Election of any polluted Creature to Holiness and Glory, flows only from the

the unmerited free Mercy and Grace of God : Which appears in the following Instances.

1. God would have been infinitely glorious and happy, had he never shewn the least Mercy to any of his Creatures that rebelled against him : There was nothing to compel him to put a Stop to the immediate Execution of the threatned Punishment. Would the irretrievable Damnation of Men have lessened his Honour ? Or does their Recovery augment his Blessedness ? No, his Justice would have triumphed when *the Wrath of Man shall praise him*, the Torments of the Damned speak out the Majesty of his Kingdom, and the Inviolableness of his Purity : We may apply what is said of God, upon another Ocession, to our Purpose, *Darkness is as Light before him*, the darkest Smoke of Hell's Fire has the Stamp of the divine Holiness upon it, and shines to his Praise. Must it not then be the freest Grace to save that Person, whose eternal Ruin would have manifested the Glory of his Holiness, the Wisdom of his Government, and the Terror of his Power ?

I am far from supposing that God did not design his own Glory in redeeming Men, or that there are not now Sources and Subjects of Praise arising hence, that would not have been otherwise celebrated ; but this is no Objection against what our Apostle asserts, because it is the *Grace and Mercy* of this Work which is the Fountain of this Honour and Praise : But, abstracting from Grace, there is nothing to move God to spare any Sinner, *Job xxii. 3. Is it any Pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous ? Or is it Gain to him, that thou makest thy Ways perfect ? And Chap. xxxv. 6. If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him ? Or if thy Transgressions*
be

be multiplied, what dost thou to him? Ver. 8. Thy Wickedness may hurt a Man as thou art, and thy Righteousness may profit the Son of Man.

2^{dly}. The Salvation of Sinners is so far from proceeding from any Thing beside Grace to move God to it, that it is contrary to the ordinary Laws of God's moral Government of the World, and seemed at first View toully his Holiness and Justice: That the foolish could not stand in his Sight, for he was of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, and that he was a consuming Fire to all the Workers of it; were Maxims concerning his Government received by the Angels, while Mercy was known only to himself, and no Way, imagined by Creatures, to reconcile these Perfections with the Safety of Transgressors, and they had seen this dreadfully exemplified in the Ruin and Punishment of the first apostate Spirits. The Sentence of the Law was, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*; and, in Consequence of this, their being thrust into Hell was as natural an Effect of God as a Law-giver, as his pushing the Sun in its Course flowed from the stated Rules whereby he manages the heavenly Bodies: And as that bright Luminary could not be stopped above *Gibeon* without a Miracle, and counteracting these ordinary Laws of Nature; so the preventing the Death of Sinners was a Miracle as far above the Rules of God's moral Management; and is not this a Demonstration that *by Grace we are saved*? Now if we consider what was necessary to repair the divine Honour stained by Sin, and to prevent Disorder in the World, which seemed to have happened by the Salvation of Sinners, what a glorious incomprehensible Scene of Grace is opened to us? Hence the Son of God

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tabernacled amongst Men; the almighty God became Subject to the Law, and, having suffered all the Affronts, Reproach and Misery, that the Rage of Devils and Men could pour on him, *endured the Cross and despised the Shame*; Immortality and Life was for a little Time subjected to Death, that he might accomplish the divine Decrees of Grace, and bring many Sinners unto Glory: Thus he became a *Captain of Salvation*, and a *perfect high Priest*. O the insearchable Riches and Freedom of the divine Mercy! There is no Proportion betwixt the Value of the Sufferings of the *Messiah*, and the highest Services of the noblest Angel: How unmerited, how absolute and free must the Grace be, when they were endured for polluted wretched Sinners? Surely herein God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us; that the just suffered for the unjust, and the Lord of all for Rebels who abused his Person and contemned his Laws.

Further in the *third Place*, though God had determined to save some of the lost Posterity of *Adam*, there was no Obligation on him to elect one more than another: When he chused *Jacob* and refused *Esau*, before the Children had done any Good or Evil, it must be, because he hath Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and hath Compassion on whom he will have Compassion. The divine Pleasure is the peculiar unmixed Fountain of Election: Creatures having nothing independent of him, no Powers, no Aptitude to do good, nor Readiness to embrace the Terms of the Gospel; but what God decrees, he bestows on them. It is not my Business at this Time, to combat the Reasonings of *Pelagius* and his Followers: But that God should have fore-
seen

seen any Faith or Tendency to it that was not decreed by him, is to bring in heathnish Fate; and to rob God of his supreme Direction in all Events, is the worst Kind of Sacrilege. Let us rely on so sure a Word of Prophecy, as *Eph. i. 5.* that we are *predestinated unto the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ to himself, only according to the good Pleasure of his Will,* and *Rom. ix. 23.* that he makes known the *Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had afore prepared unto Glory.*

Thus I have briefly shewn, in some Instances, that the divine Decrees concerning Man's Happiness in all their Parts and Relations, have no other Source but *Grace*, and in the Accomplishment of them it is so too: For the Elect of God are born under the Dominion of the basest Lusts, and are *Children of Wrath as well as others*; and the unclean Fountain is in them a Source of innumerable Sins, as it is in the Reprobate, the Moment before the Rod of God's Power makes them Subjects to the Redeemer; they have as little of spiritual Beauty and Amiability, as the Soul that is for ever left to perish in its Sins. And must it not be *Grace*, without any Motive from us, that engages God to convert us to himself, when all Believers are wallowing in their own Blood the Moment he covered their Nakedness and set his Love on them? Had these Nations who enjoy the Light of the Gospel any better Claim to that Privilege, than the most ignorant *Indians*? Might not *Moab* and not *Israel* have possessed the *Glory and the Covenants*? And were it possible that natural Accomplishments, and acquired Attainments, and the Improvement of our own Abilities, could have moved God in bestowing his spiritual Favours, had not the *Greek* and

the *Roman* a more favourable Claim than the *Jew*? Again, where the Grace of God hath appeared, do we not see it take hold of the worst of Sinners, and found of them that seek it not; while, perhaps, many who have some faint natural Desires after God and Happiness, are passed by, on purpose to demonstrate, that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth Mercy.

It would conduce to our Purpose, and be a pleasant Subject of Meditation, to trace the divine Conduct towards Saints, and observe how every advanced Step they make towards Heaven is owing to Grace: But, seeing this would consume too much Time, we may only make upon this Head two or three Remarks.

1. How conspicuously doth Grace shine in the Justification of Sinners? The infinite Purity of God, and the exalted Majesty of his Government, make it impossible for him to accept Obedience that is spotted with any Degree of Unrighteousness. Foolish Men may fancy, that the divine Mercy will engage him to be pleased with imperfect, and, in some Measure, impure Services; but this is likening him to our selves: Did we seriously consider the infinite Distance betwixt his Holiness and ours, we would be convinced, that it were more unbecoming it to reward or absolve the best Saint upon Earth on his own Account, than it would be for us to have Delight in the most wretched and virious Sinners. Wherefore God hath laid help upon one that is mighty to save: It is that everlasting Righteousness brought in by the Messiah, which gives us any Title to Pardon and Glory; this is the only Garment which can protect us from the Lashes of the divine Wrath; it is it alone which
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justifies in God's Sight, for *all our Righteousness is as filthy Rags*; even Faith does not directly give us a Title to Heaven, it interests us in Christ's Righteousness, and it is upon this we must found our Claim to Immortality and Life: There is no Truth with more Fervour and Frequency urged upon Men by our Apostle, than that *by the Works of the Law no Man can be justified*; and what can be a higher Proof that *by Grace we are saved*?

2dly. Tho' it be an Effect of unbounded undeserved Goodness in God, that Faith should give us an Interest in the Redeemer; yet, further, even it is not the Product of our own Powers. Had God done no more but provided a complete Saviour, *Christ the Lord*, to be embraced by our own Strength, his Goodness would have been gloriously manifested: But Sinners would have eternally perished in their Iniquity, none would have fled to the Rock of Ages; but the Charms of Sense, and the Force of beloved Corruption, would have sunk all into Hell: It is necessary that God draw Sinners before they come to him; a creating Power alone can make *one that is accustomed to do Evil, learn to do well*, and indeed how can it prove otherwise? New Acts of Vice strengthen the Habit; and if Persons are not able to bear up against the Beginnings of Sin, can they ever afterwards conquer growing Lusts? And we find *the creating of Men unto good Works*, every where in Scripture, attributed to the immediate Operation of God. If *we be saved through Faith*, and *that not of ourselves, but the Gift of God*; it must be *by Grace*, that the gradual Advances in Sanctification of a renewed Soul are made. But,

3dly. It deserves our Remark, that every Thing which God requires of us, and works in Saints, as preparatory to the heavenly Glory, is really in it self an Ornament and Advantage to us. He does not impose upon Men a Load of Practices that have no real Goodness in themselves; for, abstracting from their making us meet for immortal Life, true Holiness and Faith are the greatest Excellency, and the Perfection of Happiness to a reasonable Soul. O the incomprehensible Goodness of God! To add a Reward to this excellent Law, the Obedience whereto has, in its own Bosom, Pleasures infinitely beyond the Merit of the Service: And can we have a higher Notion of Grace, than that God should bestow Heaven on us, if we'll but study our own Interest, and do what is in it self our greatest Beauty and Ornament?

Lastly. Heaven and consummate Felicity is of Grace, I mean, that there is even no necessary Connection betwixt Grace and Glory, but what flows from Grace; besides, God might make us less happy there tho' we were innocent. I will only notice, upon this large Subject, that the Assurance the Spirits of the Just have, that they shall be *ever with the Lord*, is intirely of Grace: For this Perseverance does not flow from the Powers of, even, a confirmed Saint. It is plain, that an innocent Creature may reject some Temptations, and be prevailed upon by more dangerous ones; holy Spirits may depart from their first Habitation, for it is God alone who is necessarily pure from his own Perfection: But finite Holiness cannot be above every Assault and Temptation, if God did not, from mere Grace, support and preserve it from falling by his omnipotent Arm.

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Thus I have endeavoured to give a short Proof, and, indeed, a very disproportioned one to such a noble and copious Doctrine, that the eternal Salvation and immortal Felicity of the Redeemed, in all its Parts and Circumstances, from its first Source and Spring, to the finishing Stroke given it in Heaven, is intirely owing to the Grace of God: *By Grace are ye saved.*

From what has been discoursed we shall draw the following practical Inferences.

1. If it be so, then it must be our Duty, with the greatest Humility and Gratitude, to adore and admire the Love of God, which is manifested so much to our Advantage in Christ Jesus. *Lord, what is Man that thou art mindful of him, and thus regardest him?* How unable are we to have suitable Thoughts of this Mystery? Our Capacities are swallowed up in the Greatness thereof; and there must always be an infinite Disproportion betwixt the Mercy of God, and our Apprehensions of it: For the Ways of his Grace are unsearchable, and his Paths past finding out. It should be the greatest Uneasiness of our Souls, that debased Pleasures, and trifling uselefs Enquiries, do so much divert us from this excellent Subject, which ought to be our Meditation Day and Night.

2dly. If we are saved by Grace, we ought certainly to shew forth the Praise of it in our Lives. The Grace of God should, at the same Time, teach and move us to *abandon all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this evil World.* Love to the Redeemer should be the leading governing Principle of our Lives; for what clearer Proof can there be of a vile unworthy Soul, debased to the greatest Pitch of Degeneracy, than

to neglect so much Love and Mercy? This Grace of God should constrain us to consecrate our Souls and Bodies, ourselves and our Services, to his Honour, who gave himself for us, and, tho' possessed of all, became poor, that we through his Poverty might become rich.

3dly. From this Doctrine we may have an Answer to the Question, *Micah vi. 6. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God?* Hence we see that it is not with Burnt-offerings, and Calves of a Year old: The Lord is not pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with Ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl, nor will he accept the Fruit of the Body for the Sin of the Soul, for all these would be Justification by Works: But this Doctrine leads us to the Righteousness of Jesus Christ which is through Faith. May we be clothed with that pure and clean Raiment of the Saints, that Obedience which will abide the severest Search into it by God himself, and, when weighed, will not be found wanting: And, thus appearing before our Judge, may we be justified and saved by Grace through Faith.

4thly. Hence we may see the great Weight and Moment of the Doctrine concerning the Grace of God. It is not a light Matter or trifling Speculation; for we are saved by it: It was God's chief Purpose to exalt this Attribute of his in particular, in the whole Parts of the glorious Scheme of Redemption, *Eph. ii. 6, 7. For he raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus; that, in the Ages to come, he might shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, in his Kindness towards us through Christ Jesus:* And the Apostle tells us, that Justification is of Faith that it might be by Grace, *Rom. iv. 16. There is indeed no Perfection of*
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God but what shines in the Redeemer's Face; but the Wisdom, Holiness and Power that are shewn in *bringing many Sons into Glory*, are, if I may so speak, subservient unto Grace, and are managed to advance its Honour and Excellency. And if so, it cannot but be of the highest Consequence to us, that we don't imbibe wrong Notions concerning this Article, upon a right Understanding of which, and practising accordingly, depends all the Tribute of Praise, and Revenues of Glory, which God requires of us for his stupendious Love in *seeking and saving them that were lost*. There never was any Thing more fatal to Christianity, than an apostatizing from, and denying of this Grace. May we never make the least Approach to the lessening of it: But beg that God would establish us in a firm Faith thereof, and an utter Abhorrence of every Opinion which detracts from the Perfection of its Glory, or tends to exalt Man and his Powers, especially in an Age where it is so vigorously attacked upon all Sides, and when the Devil employs the Advantages of Wit and Learning to insnare Men from this Belief, which he does too successfully, since vain Man swells with Pride and Conceit, and would be wise, *tho' he be born like the wild Ass's Colt*. May we have Grace to joyn with the Spirits round about the Throne in attributing all to the Lamb that was slain, who is alone worthy to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing. Now, as we love the Redeemer, and would be answerable to the Obligations we are laid under to God, as we regard the Honour due to his Name, and would partake of the Benefits purchased by him, let us
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only glory in the Goodness and Mercy of God, and boast in the Merits and powerful Intercession of our Saviour, and the Gifts he received when he ascended up on high, even for Rebels, that God the Lord would dwell amongst them, since by Grace we are saved, and not of Works, lest any Man should boast.

5thly. If by Grace we are saved, then we ought to have the tenderest Concern that we do not dishonour and debase it, either in Principle or Practice. There can never be a greater Reproach cast thereon, than by turning it to Licentiousness, and abusing it to sooth us in our Lusts. Do we believe that God will prostitute his Holiness, upon the Throne whereof he sits, and which is his Glory, to the Wickedness and Ignorance of Sinners? No, that he hateth all the Workers of Iniquity, is an eternal Truth, and it is the Honour of his Grace that it turns Men from Foolishness; and the Design of Christ's coming into the World was, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil, whereof Sin is the chief.

How absurd is it in the *Antinomians*, to fancy that the Law's being a Rule to Believers, is a diminishing and tarnishing the Lustre of Grace, since, as we noticed above, Holiness is it self the Beauty and Perfection of the Soul? Were we under the Dominion of Sin, we must want our true Dignity and real Worth. Can it be a clouding of Grace, if God, in order to make us completely blessed in Heaven, requires and enables us to be in part happy upon Earth: But let us never be so fatally mistaken, as to dream that *without Holiness we can please the Lord*, or have a real Title to his Favour. Let us detaste every Opinion that tends

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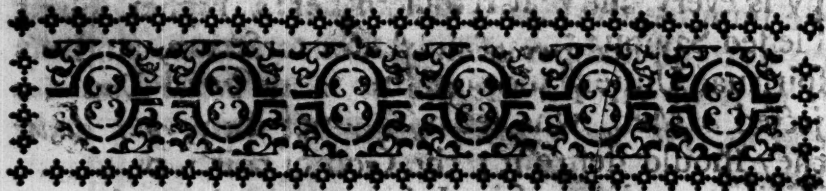
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to lessen the Obligations to Obedience, and may we improve the Grace of God as a higher Bond on us to all manner of holy Conversation, and as it is Rom. vi. 14. *Let Sin no more have Dominion over us; for we are not under the Law, but under Grace.*



S E R.



S E R M O N VIII.

II. COR. viii. 9. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his Poverty might be rich.*



WISE of Men, Solomon; gives it as his settled Opinion, Prov. iv. 7. that Wisdom is the principal Thing; and therefore we should get Wisdom, and with all our getting get Understanding: This should be the Employment of our Life, while other Pursuits, being of infinitely less Moment and Worth, should still yield to it, and never engross any Time that might be spent in acquiring so noble a Purchase; for she gives to all that possess her an Ornament of Grace to their Head, a Crown of Glory she delivers to them. Yet how lamentable a Prospect does the World afford us, though this Wisdom be more precious than Rubies, and all Things which can be desired

This with the Three following Sermons are the first which the Author preached.

desired are not to be compared unto her, for happy is every one that retaineth her: Yet, like our blessed Saviour the great Author and Fountain of spiritual Understanding, she is despised and rejected of Men, who see nothing of its Beauty that they should desire it; the God of this World hath blinded the Eyes of its Inhabitants, that this glorious Light should not shine into their Hearts; hence the far greatest Part of them are like *Nabal*, Folly is with them. It should be our Care not to be tainted with the vicious Lives, or stupid Sloth of an evil World; but to be separated from those, who, forgetting God, are tumbled from their false Security and deceiving Ease into real and everlasting Torments.

It will be evident to the most blinded Soul, and Credit given to it by the most hardned Infidel, that Wisdom excelleth Folly as far as Light excelleth Darkness; yet how few are there who bestow any Thoughts upon an unseen State, though the Ruins of Mankind be inevitable? Death assures us that we are hastning thither, and that there is no Discharge from this War. And, amongst those who make high enough Pretences to Religion and Faith, many may be found who please themselves with a very superficial Enquiry, and embrace Doctrines, upon which their Salvation depends, with less Caution than they would afford to the least of their temporal Concerns: Though it is certain that leaning to an insufficient Saviour, is inconceivably more fatal and destructive than the throwing away all the Goods we possess in this World for a Babble; and how much so ever it may be contrary to the prevailing Opinions of this Earth, the first is certainly the greatest

est Fool, and no Men have more Reason to search thoroughly into their Faith than Christians; for there is that true Value in all its Doctrines, and such are the infinite Perfections of our Redeemer, that there are sure Foundations for a rational Assent to them, and an intire Dependence and Reliance upon our Saviour.

I have upon this account made Choice of the Portion of Scripture now read, as it contains a Doctrine, not only useful but necessary, the great Subject of Christianity, *Jesus Christ crucified*, the Glory and Grace of him who was rich, and possessed all, yet for our sakes became poor. The holy Apostle applies himself, in this Chapter, to the engaging the *Corinthians*, by several Motives, to abound in that noble Duty of Charity, which is so frequently enjoined by the Laws of Christ, especially towards such as were of the Household of Faith, and Partakers with them of the common Salvation; which was so endearing a Tie, that it could scarce fail to cause those, whom Providence had favoured with an Affluence of temporal Goods, and whose Cup overflowed, to communicate of their Abundance to fellow Christians, whose Circumstances were narrower, and who wanted the Liberality of others to support them. It is the Doctrine of the Gospel, that in every Age, such as would in earnest dedicate themselves to the Service of Christ, must first take up their Cross, and thus follow him, put on a fixed Resolution to abandon all the Allurements which present Things have in them, when the doing so may, in the least, contribute to the Glory of their Master: But this in a particular manner appeared in the Beginnings of Christianity, when it was exposed to Persecution and Reproach,

Reproach; and all the Miseries whereby Satan frights Men from shaking his Chains; then in a peculiar Way it was true, that not many wise Men, nor mighty, nor noble after the Flesh, were called, but the base Things of the World, and the Things which were despised, were chosen by God, which made it the more necessary for the few that were rich, to extend their Charity with an open Hand to the others.

The Apostle incites these to whom he writes to the Practice of this Duty, by proposing to them the Example of the *Macedonians*, who were eminent for this Grace, in the first 6 *Verses*. A striving who shall make the greatest Advances in Goodness and Virtue, is a generous and commendable Emulation; and we are allowed to use the Prospect of outrunning others in the spiritual Race, and the distinguishing illustrious Glory that will be the Consequence of doing so, as an Argument to stir us up to act with Vigour and Life in performing every Christian Duty. In the 7 *Verse*, he proposes another very moving Consideration, *namely*, that they had already made a considerable Progress in a spiritual Life; and they abounding in Faith, Utterance, Knowledge, Diligence, and Love to him, it would be inexcusable in them, if they had not this Grace also. In the 8 *Verse*, he addresses them in the smoothest and most insinuating Terms, though he was an Apostle, and by his Office might have commanded them as to all the Circumstances of their bestowing Charity, and have ordered them to give so much: Yet he choosed rather to leave that to themselves, and only exhort to the Duty in general. It is much the same Way he manages towards *Philemon*, when begging a Favour

Favour of him in behalf of Onesimus, Phil. 8. *Wherefore though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for Loves sake I rather beseech thee.*

In the Text he seems to give a Reason of this his Conduct, being a Proof that there was no Necessity to lay such positive Injunctions upon them, since they had so constraining an Argument to perswade them to it as the Example of our Saviour, which was laid open before them; for *they knew the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, &c.*

Ye see then the Connection that there is betwixt this Verse and the preceeding Discourse, *namely*, the Apostle exhorting the *Corinthians* to a liberal abounding Charity towards poor Christians, and that not from Constraint, but willingly. He proposes to them, as a powerful Motive, that the unmerited Love of Jesus Christ engaged him to do and suffer infinitely more to make us happy, than was required of them in order to the Assistance of poorer Saints: And could he offer a more mighty Argument to those who knew the invaluable Benefits of Christ's Purchase, and his incomprehensible Grace and Condescension in making it for us?

In these Words we may consider *first* the State and Condition of our Saviour before he tabernacled amongst Men, and entred upon his Work as Mediator and our Surety, *he was rich*: That Lord over all, who was in himself happy and glorious beyond our Thought, and rich unto all. *2dly*. We have a surprizing Change of his State, *he became poor*: He emptied himself of his Greatness and Glory, and took upon him the Form of a Servant of the lowest kind. *3dly*. We have the Persons upon whose account he underwent this amazing

ing Alteration; it was not in behalf of Angels that he humbled himself, he suffered not to advance the Glory and promote the Interests of those pure immortal Spirits, whose constant Services to God, and untainted Loyalty to their Maker, might seem to give them some better Claim to this Advantage: No, *he took not upon him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham.* O astonishing Mercy! it can be nothing but the Goodness of God, that for us wretched miserable Sinners, who had debased our selves as low as Hell, the Son of the Father shou'd have left the Glory he was surrounded with, which he had before the World was, yet for our sakes he became poor. *4thly.* We have his great Design in all this Grace. We were sunk into the Depth of Sin and Misery, poor, empty, blind, naked Enemies to God and our selves, and abandoned to irretrievable Ruin: Now it was to deliver us hence, to draw us out of this horrible Pit, and set our Feet upon high Places, to beautifie us with the Ornaments of Innocence, and restore apostate Mankind to lost Happiness, *that we through his Poverty might be rich.* *5thly.* We have the great Source of Christ's doing all this for us, *Grace.* His infinite unbounded Goodness and Mercy, and without the smallest Shadow of Merit on our Parts to induce him thereto; *for ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* *Lastly.* We have the Connection betwixt this and the former Part of the Chapter, to wit, that this should be a forcible Motive upon all Christians to practise Charity and Compassion towards others.

This Text contains a large and momentous Subject, being the Substance of the Gospel of the Son of God, and a comprehensive Sum of what is
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taught us by the Scriptures of Truth ; for what did the Apostles preach, and the Prophets testify beforehand, but the Suffering of the *Messiah* and his Glory, *that he who was rich, for our sakes became poor ?* That I may give as comprehensive an Account of the Apostle's Design as I can, and your Time will allow, I shall endeavour to follow the ensuing Method.

1. I shall propose several important Truths which may be deduced from the Words.

2dly. I shall apply my self to evince, from some Considerations, the Certainty of what the inspired Author asserts concerning Jesus Christ, *that he was rich*, and that in the most extensive and noblest Meaning of the Word. And, as I go along, I shall consider the Alteration of this State, and lay open what is imported in his becoming poor. I might divide this into two distinct Heads, and speak of Christ's being *rich* ; and then open up the Meaning of his *becoming poor* : But I choose rather to joyn them together, both to save your Time, and because it will appear the more clearly and distinctly thereby, how he *became poor*, with respect to each of these several glorious Perfections wherein he was *rich*.

3d'y. I shall prove, that he who was *rich* and exalted, humbled himself, and became poor for the behoof and Advantage of Men : Where I shall principally consider the Influence that his Poverty had upon our Salvation, and the Fittedness or Necessity of it in order to the Accomplishment thereof, the finishing Transgression, and bringing in everlasting Righteousness.

4thly. I shall make it good, by several Arguments, that this Management of our Saviour's becoming

coming poor, has fully gained its End, and that thereby there is a Foundation laid for Sinners becoming rich.

5thly. I shall take a short View of the Riches and Happiness of Believers purchased by Christ, whence the Greatness of the Benefit will be made evident.

6thly. I shall draw several practical Inferences, and shew some of the many Directions as to the Conduct of our Life which this Doctrine affords.

1. We may observe from this Text, that as the Share God the Father has in bringing many Sons unto Glory, his accepting the fulfilling of the Law by another, he being the supreme Judge of the World; his putting the least Stop to the Execution of the threatned Punishment, and not immediately driving Sinners into everlasting Darknes, flowed intirely from Grace: So the Part the Son of God bore in the Recovery of fallen Man, had no other Source, but was equally the Effect of the freest and most disinterested Grace. Hence *Grace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*, are so frequently joyned together in the apostolical Benedictions; it eminently shining in and proceeding from both. And indeed they must be stupidly ignorant of the Person and Work of the Redeemer, and of themselves whom he came to save, that are not convinced of this Truth: And who, when they behold the only begotten of the Father, do not perceive him full of Grace and Truth. And this follows plainly from our Text, since, for him who was rich, willingly to become poor for our sakes, must be of Grace.

What is included in the eternal Generation of the Son by the Father, is a Mystery unknown to us, too wonderful for us: But it is evident from

Scripture, and believed by all who deserve the Name of Christians, that nothing can possibly be designed thereby, which in the least detracts from the infinite Perfection and supreme Deity of our Saviour; and if he be God, he must act with the highest Freedom, and every Thing like Necessity or Force must be eternally removed from him. So that though the *Messiah* be represented as coming to do his Father's Will, as it was written in the Volume of God's Book concerning him, and the Law of God is said to be *within his Heart*: Yet the Consent of the second Person was necessary to his becoming our Surety, and, being made under this Law, the *Counsel of Peace* was between them both. Besides, the God-man Jesus Christ had the Perfection of Innocence, never was guilty of the least Transgression of the Law, and so could be under no Obligation to bear the Punishment, but from his own Consent and out of mere good Will. Can we conceive freer and more absolute Grace, than for him who knew no Sin, neither was any Guile found in his Lips, to become Sin for us, that we might thereby be made the Righteousness of God? Let us endeavour to raise our Souls to suitable Apprehensions of this Grace of Jesus Christ, and strive to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth thereof. We ought often to be meditating upon this noble Subject, which will be the uninterrupted eternal Source of Love and Praise, to the ravished admiring Spirits of just Men made perfect. We should not only know in general that by Grace we are saved: But it ought to be our Work, to take a View of the Freedom and Mercy that appears in the Management of each of the Persons; and let the Grace of the Redeemer, as of God the Father, kindle our Hearts into a holy Flame of divine Love, and add
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greater Force to this heavenly Fire, which should be perpetual and never go out.

2dly. From the Connection of the Words with the foregoing ones, *namely*, the Apostle's pressing this wonderful Condescension and Grace of Jesus Christ, as a Motive to Charity and Compassion towards others, we may observe, that our blessed Lord is the great Pattern of a Christian's Life : This plainly follows from the Text, else *his becoming poor* could be no such Argument for our imitating him therein. He is that living Rule, which ought not only to influence our outward Actions, and direct our Behaviour before the World ; but his Example must pierce into our Hearts, and govern there, when we open our Breasts, Christ should be found every where and in the innermost Recesses : For this alone will be the Foundation of Joy, in that Day when that God, whose Understanding is infinite, will disclose before Angels and Men the most concealed Projects of the craftiest of Sinners. If Christ be all and in all to us, as he must be to us if we have any Share in his Purchase, we will certainly copy after him : This is the great Commandment, that we are to *take his Yoke upon us, and to learn of him* ; thus we shall have Rest to our Souls. We are to be Followers of the Apostles only in so far as they are of Christ. We are always to consider *this great high Priest and Apostle of our Profession*, for we are his Servants, and he our Lord and Head, *and our Life is hid with God in Christ*. And it is a certain Character of those who are washed in his Blood, that they are Followers of the Lamb whithersoever he goeth : For even hereunto were we called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps. The least

and most insignificant Instrument employed in the Service of the Tabernacle, was strictly appointed to be made conformable to *the Pattern shewn in the Mount*: It is much more necessary that all Christians, who are little *Temples for the holy Ghost to dwell in*, should be agreeable to that glorious living Temple who came down from Heaven, the Lord the Saviour. We can never have any Ground for the least Fear of wandering, if we put our selves under the Conduct of this *great Captain of Salvation*; following his Steps, we may securely tread the most rugged and difficult Paths, for we may be assured that the End thereof shall be the Salvation of our Souls. How great an Encouragement, and how moving a Consideration should it be to us, to *leave the Things that are behind*, and with Diligence and Delight, *press forward to what remains*, to make greater Progress and more vigorous Efforts in the Ways of God's Commandments? This is a sure Pattern, that is tried and safe in all the various Circumstances of Life. We may hence learn Wisdom and Understanding, for by him was the divine Law lived over in its greatest Purity: And *as a Son he was faithful in all the House of God*, approved by God himself; and the Accuser of the Brethren will not stain his Fidelity, or lay any Thing to his Charge. Let us then endeavour to be *holy as he was holy*, in all manner of godly Conversation: May we examine our Actions by this Standard; and when we resolve about any Thing, let the first Question we propose be, Is this agreeable to the Life of our Saviour? And can we find a Precedent for it in his Practice? Are we *in this Followers of God as dear Children*? Or, is the Enemy of Christ and our Souls, leading us blindfold
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into crooked Paths? We should with Caution and Watchfulness consider the whole Circumstances of our Life, that, *setting Christ before us*, we may, like him, *be wise as Serpents and harmless as Doves*.

3dly. I remark from the Connection of the Text, that the incomprehensible Love of Christ towards Sinners, and his glorious Grace in seeking and saving them that were lost, though it should in a particular Manner engage us to love him with our supreme Affection, and make our Souls burn within us therewith, when we meditate upon *his becoming poor that we might be made rich*; yet the Effects of it must not be confined thereto, but extend themselves to all the Commands of God, nor is there any Part of the moral Law, but to the Obedience of which there is a strong Tie laid upon us by *the Grace of Jesus Christ*: Thus we see the Apostle uses it as an Argument for Charity, and makes this Grace an Effect of it. I the rather take Notice of this, because it is a Duty so little minded by Christians: There are many who fatally deceive their own Souls, who make a loud enough Noise with their clamorous Religion, and buoy themselves up with an Opinion that they love their Redeemer, and are ravished with the Contemplation of his Person, Attributes and Works; while this has no Influence upon them to practise Justice, Mercy and Compassion towards others, but they are abandoned to Fraud and Oppression, and their covetous narrow Spirits never put on Bowels towards poorer Christians, whose straitned Circumstances in this World call for their tender Sympathy: Such lie against themselves, for Faith and Love to the Redeemer is dead and empty, except it bear Fruit and produce good Works. Let

then our Affection to our Saviour engage us to love his Members, and be united thereby to all those of whom he is the Head ; and to every other Part of a virtuous Life, and to the abandoning of all Sin : That so, *having put on Christ Jesus, we may walk in all Newness of Life, and behave worthy of our holy Calling.*

4thly. Hence we may remark, that we ought really to shew our Love to Christ, not only by the direct Actings of our Souls towards him, but in the Practice of every Duty, by *glorifying him with these Spirits and Bodies which are his.* This is one great Difference betwixt the moral Performances of natural Men, and those of true Believers. The first have no Regard to the Redeemer in them, they don't flow from the Principle of Love to him, nor are they moved by a Sense of what he has done for Sinners ; but, if they are in some Measure just and liberal, if they are tender and generous, it either flows from their natural Constitutions, in which they are not active, or they oft-times sacrifice to their own Ease, and to the quieting the Furies of Conscience, and burn Incense to their Vanity and Pride, without remembering their Maker and Saviour : Whereas a real Christian is far different, he knows how to *live to Christ*, to be moved by his Love, and shew forth his Praise in the minutest Action and the ordinary Business of Life, whether he eats or drinks 'tis to the Lord, it is the Love of his Master that constrains him to obey the divine Laws and die unto Sin ; when he gives freely, he bears in Mind how he freely received from Christ ; he is joyned by Affection to all that call upon the Name of the Lord in Sincerity, from a Sense of the Obligations he is under

der to him, who gave himself for us, that he might take away the Enmity, Hatred, Strife, which rage amongst the Children of Disobedience, and make us love one another even as he loved us. This is the divine Art of a spiritual Life, in our ordinary Employments to be moved by the Glory of Christ, and to promote his Honour, that so our Saviour may be found every where in us. This is the heavenly Dew that crowns all the Performances of a Christian, beautifies and makes them *fruitful and acceptable in the beloved.*

I might have made a *fifth* Remark concerning the special Ties we are bound by, and the many excellent Directions concerning the Management of our Charity, which appear from the Apostle's arguing in our Text.

But I proceed to the *second* Thing mentioned above, *namely*, to evince, from several Instances, the Truth of what our Apostle asserts concerning the Condition of Jesus Christ, before he entred upon his Office as *Messiah*, that *he was rich.* This is a Subject, in the Greatness whereof we are swallowed up, our Thoughts are not strong enough to soar to the Height of it; for, after our utmost Application and Search, it is but a small Portion thereof we can know. The best Saints in Heaven will have more Reason, than the Queen of *Sheba* had to assert concerning the Wisdom of *Solomon*, when they shall have a more full and elevated View of the Glories of the Redeemer, to exclaim, *that the Half of what they then shall perceive, was not told them* by the ablest Minister of the New Testament: But that even after this Grace was brought to Light by the Gospel, a great Part of it was unperceived by

by the Understandings of Men, and will be to Eternity hid from created Eyes.

I shall endeavour in a few Words to unfold a little of these Riches of Christ, and in order thereto let us *first* consider the Meaning and Extent of the Word *rich*, as it is used amongst Men.

1. Then, a Person is not reputed rich, though he have what may enable him to live easily enough in the World, except he possess an Affluence of its Goods, whereby he can make a Figure above that of ordinary People: But a Man is said to be rich, who abounds in the Enjoyments of Life, or has Means to purchase them, whose Fortune cannot only furnish him with the Necessaries, and even Conveniencies of temporal Things, but with all their Pleasures and Splendor.

2dly. To make a Person rich in any Thing, in an extended Sense, he must possess more than will answer his own Occasions. He gets not this Character except he be able to communicate to others; and have Access, from an *Overflow of his Cup*, to exercise Liberality towards such as are in lower Circumstances; and can make the Poor feel, to their Advantage, his Ability to support and relieve them.

Beside this proper Signification of the Word *rich*, it is used in several metaphorical Senses. It is applied to the Endowments of the Mind as well as to the Goods of the Body: And a Man who has a large Share of these, and is dignified with Ornaments of the Soul in a Degree superior to the common Level, gets this Name. Hence we read of *the Riches of Wisdom and Knowledge, of Grace and Goodness*: And we are commanded to be *rich in good Works*. And in general, and so I take it in the

the Text, it signifies a large Measure of any Thing which conduces to Glory and Happiness: Thus *Moses* is said to have *esteemed the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt*, that is, he believed all the Indignity and Contempt which could be poured upon him for his Regard to God, and the maintaining a good Conscience, had more of true Value and Worth, and gave him greater Satisfaction, than all the Splendor and Riches of *Pharaoh's Court* could have afforded him.

Now I shall endeavour to prove that Christ was rich in all these Meanings of the Word, so far as they contain any Thing which can contribute to the Perfection of Glory and Bliss: And as I go along, I shall shew, at some length, that with respect to each of these glorious Excellencies, he became poor for our sakes; but before I enter upon it, I would propose two or three Things to prevent Mistakes in this Matter.

1. When God is said to *humble himself*, and, as in our Text, to *become poor*, we are not to understand it as if there was any real Abatement of his Happiness and Glory, and that he possessed less of them than formerly: No, *he is from everlasting to everlasting God, the same to Day, Yesterday, and for ever*, and there can never be either an Increase or Diminishing of his Perfections. It respects his Appearances to Creatures: And when he comes in *Fashion as a Man, without any Form or Comeliness*, 'tis only to them; for in himself he is that Moment *the Image of the invisible God, and the Brightness of his Glory*. This may be well enough illustrated by an obvious Simile, when the Sun is intercepted by a Cloud, it becomes to us Darkness; but it really sends out as much Light, and is as bright in it self,

self, as when the Air is clear that we may behold its Brightness. Nor,

2dly. Are we to imagine, that God did not principally design his own Glory in *becoming poor for our sakes*. He must *do all Things for himself*: Creatures, and every Circumstance they can be placed in, contribute to his Praise. God is the highest Good, and the noblest End, and it would be an Imperfection in him not to have the greatest Regard to himself; and it is certain, that there is no Perfection of the Deity but what shines with an uncommon Lustre in the Redeemer's Face, and he was never richer in them, than when giving up the Ghost upon the Cross: But this does not detract from the Truth of the Apostle's Assertion, that *for our sakes he became poor*; for 'tis his doing so, his Condescension and Grace, that is the Fountain of the Honour which accrues to him. If a rich Man deal liberally with those in Straits, and, it may be, reduce himself to narrower Circumstances, that his Bounty may be more universal; or if, when the Cause of Religion and Liberty, and the Good of others requires it, he should *spend and be spent*, in becoming poor he really consults his own true Interest, for all the Paths of Virtue are Pleasantness, and the Satisfaction of doing a Person's Duty, spreads a Joy over the Soul vastly beyond what all his Riches occasioned him, yet hereby the Generosity of that Person is not at all lessened.

3dly. Where there was a *being poor*, in a strict Sense, it can only be attributed to the human Nature of Christ. It was according to this Nature, that God-man endured Hunger and Pain, all the Mis-

Miseries, and Death it self, which he was exposed to upon Earth.

Having laid down these Positions to clear our Way, I proceed to what I proposed, *namely*, to lay before you some of those glorious Perfections, wherein Christ, before he took upon him the Character of our Saviour, was rich: And distinctly to shew, how he became poor with respect to each of these Excellencies.

This will be evident beyond Contradiction, if we consider in general, that he is God, and, in a proper Sense, *Partaker of the divine Nature*, and necessarily possessed of all the adorable Perfections of the ever blessed Godhead. How do all the fading limited Riches of the noblest Creature vanish, and hide themselves as ashamed to claim that Title? Is there any the least Proportion betwixt them, and what is imported in being *God*? Not only all the Perfections which our Souls can comprehend, but every Thing which is in it self glorious and great, is the necessary Result of his Nature: He is the boundless Ocean, from which all that is valuable in the Creation derives its Original, continues in Being, and in which it is swallowed up. Now as the Scheme of Christianity makes it necessary that the *Messiah* should be God, for who else could perform such mighty Works, as *the finishing of Transgression, making an End of Sin, and bringing in everlasting Righteousness*? So the Scriptures in many Places, declare him to be such, he is *the everlasting Father, the mighty God, God over all blessed for ever*. He had not a dependent or metaphorical Deity, as Kings upon Earth who are called Gods: For he is *the great God and our Saviour*: And so being the *King immortal and invisible, Honour and*
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Majesty were his everlasting Garments, and his Throne was surrounded by all the divine Glories, which can never be found out to Perfection, or beheld by created Eyes. So that in general, I say that our Saviour was rich in all the Treasures of divine Perfections, which could render him excellent in himself, or rich unto all Creatures, of whose Being and Enjoyments he was the inexhausted Fountain.

Now with respect to these he became *poor* by his amazing Condescension, which will be an endless Surprise to the Inhabitants of *Zion*, who know most of the Goodness of their King in taking upon him the *Seed of Abraham* in the *Form of a Servant*. Had he, instead of a Child laid in a Manger, and the Son of a poor Family, been born the Heir of *Cesar*, and brought up in the Midst of all the Splendor and Pomp of *Augustus's* Court: Yet his taking the human Nature into a personal Union with the divine, must be a great Argument of Humiliation; his *tabernacling in Flesh*, of whatever kind, and the almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth's being so nearly allied to the Creature, is an astonishing Instance of his *Poverty*. The Relations that God is pleased to come under to his Church, of a *Father* and a *Husband*, proceed from, and are a Proof of glorious Grace: But for him to be so joyned to Mankind, as they become in some Sense one, and the Actions of the one are attributed to the other, and the Sufferings of the human Nature are spoken of God, who redeemed the Church *with his own Blood*, is the *Mystery hid from Ages and Generations*, which is *without Controversy great*. If the Psalmist, upon a View of the *Heavens*, the *Moon and Stars* which God's *Fingers* had made,

made, cries out, *What is Man that thou art mindful of, andregardest him?* And if Solomon, at the Dedication of the Temple, when considering that *Jerohobab* should dwell there, though it was but a typical Habitation, cries out, in a Transport of Wonder and Praise, *and will God in very Deed dwell with Men?* What have we reason to do, to whom is made known *God manifest in the Flesh?* This surely is inexplicable by finite Minds, for the Angels do not comprehend it, but *search into it.* Thus, without doubt, the eternal Son's taking upon him the Seed of *Abraham*, is the first and greatest Instance of Humiliation, and is enough by its self fully to make it out, that *though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.*

But it will be proper to consider more particularly a few of those Perfections in the Possession whereof he was *rich*, and to shew that as to all of these he became *poor.*

1. His Power is beyond all Limits, *he does in the Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth, what pleaseth him;* nor can any restrain his working: If we speak of Strength, his right Hand is full of Power, because of the Greatness whereof never one of his Enemies could exalt himself on high. Thus the Psalmist addresses him, *Psal. xlv. 3. Gird thy Sword upon thy Thigh, O most mighty;* and *Psal. lxxxix. 19.* where the Father is brought in, as making Choice of the Person who was to be the Mediator of the Covenant, it is said, *He had laid Help upon one that was mighty.* Now, can there be a more convincing Argument of his infinite Riches in this Attribute, than his innumerable Operations, which could not be effected but by the greatest Power? The creating of Things out of nothing

thing, is the highest Instance of it that could be possibly given: *Without him there was nothing made that was made*, the beautiful and stupendous Fa-
brick of Heaven and Earth, and the Angels, those glorious Spirits which *excel in Strength*, own him for their Lord and Master, *Col. i. 16. For by him were all Things created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers.* It is he who in the Beginning laid the Foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of his Hands, and he upholds all Things by the Word of his Power. How weak and contemptible is the Power of the mightiest Princes upon Earth, who make such a Stir and Bustle amongst their Fellow-creatures, and lord it over their Inferiors, as if they were beyond Controul? But there is a stronger than they, insuperable Opposition oft-times attends their Projects, and their Weakness defeats their Designs: Nothing upon Earth can be secure against a superior Force, but, one Time or other, that which seems established upon the strongest Bottom, may be overturned by an open Foe, or the unforeseen Hand of a hidden Traitor: The greatest Empires have long ago mouldered into Dust, and are no more, but have become weak as others, and a Thousand Accidents may put a finishing Stroke to their Greatness and Vanity. But Jesus Christ is rich in Power, all his Enemies are put under his Feet, and he is above Possibility of being shaken from his Throne; for he is represented, *Psal. ii. 9.* as having a *Rod of Iron*, which can never be wrested from him, and is strong enough to beat down before his Face the most obstinate of his Foes: *The Enemy could not have*

have exacted upon him, nor the Son of Wickedness have afflicted him; for while his Arrows pierce the Hearts of the King's Enemies, he is infinitely beyond their Reach.

Now, as he was rich in Mightiness, with respect to this Excellency, in an eminent Manner, so he became poor when he was manifested in the End of the World to take away Sin. He did not come forth in the Bloom of a vigorous Youth, or the manly Strength of the firmer Age of Life: But he was born a weak tender Infant, unable to support himself, and, like other Children, stood in need of the Assistance of his Parents to nourish and preserve him during his helpless Years. And while he advanced in Days, he grew up before him as a tender Plant, and as a Root out of a dry Ground, without Form or Comeliness: And lived upon Earth subject to all our Diseases and Pains, exposed to the same Infirmities of Body and Anxieties of Mind, which were in a peculiar manner his Lot, who was a *Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Griefs*; and Hunger and Thirst were made the Portion of him who could have turned the Stones into Bread for his Ule.

And, though he was so rich in Power, as by one Rebuke of his Countenance to fright all the Legions of Darkness; or by one Pull of those everlasting Chains wherein he keeps them bound, easily drag them back to the Prison of Torment in the Height of their Fury: Yet he became so poor, in this respect, as to be carried from Place to Place by the implacable Enemy to his Glory, the Devil, in the Wilderness; and, during forty Days, to be exposed to the insulting Temptations of one of his Slaves.

And though indeed he made the Power of the Godhead shine sometimes through his Miracles, and by them gave a sufficient Demonstration, that it was only Condescension and Goodness which hindered him to bring Legions of Angels and consume his Enemies; yet no more of these mighty Works were done by him, than were necessary to confirm his Doctrine and Mission, and give Assurance to all Ages concerning the Truth of his Religion: But he quietly *submitted his Back to the Smilers*; endured Persecution, in its most shameful and frightful Shapes, from the Hands of Men; was taken by a Band of *Roman* Soldiers, derided and scourged by them who at length *crucified the Prince of Life*.

Which amazing Alteration, when we shall, one Day with open Eyes, behold this Jesus again surrounded with the Riches and Glory of his original Power, armed with eternal Fire, and attended by Myriads of mighty Angels, these flaming Executioners of his Pleasure; when we shall see Legions of conquered Devils dragged before his Throne, and a trembling *Pilate*, with the extravagant wicked Multitude who preferred *Barabbas* to their Saviour, pale and frightened by his Looks: I say, in the Day when all this shall be revealed from Heaven, what astonishing Thoughts will we have of his Humiliation? And what an Emphasis will we discern in the Apostle's Expression *that he became poor*, when we call to Mind, that this same almighty King stooped so low as to appear before the Tribunal of the *Roman* Governor, and when in the Excess of his inconceivable Agony upon the Cross, was reviled by those who passed by, and insulted for his want of Power? *Matth. xxvii.*

42. *He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the Cross.* It will then evidently appear that this Weakness was voluntary, and that, as the Apostle asserts, *tho' he was rich, yet he became poor.* But to proceed,

In the *second Place*, Christ was rich in his supreme Dominion and Authority, which spread it self through the vast Universe, and had no Bounds either of Place or Time. This evidently flowed from the Exercise of his Power, the creating of every Being, whereby he became the Head of all Principality and Power. His divine Nature possessed originally, what was given to his Person as Mediator as a Reward of his Obedience, the submissive Bow of ever Knee, and the open Acknowledgment of every Tongue that he was Lord; and, beside the Authority he was invested with under the Notion of Redeemer, as *the mighty God the Government was laid upon his Shoulder*: And so the Apostle informs us, *Heb. i. 6. When the Father bringeth in the first begotten into the World, he saith, Let all the Angels of God worship him.*

Now in this respect, *for your sakes he became poor*; for as it is *Gal. iv. 4. When the Fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law.* When he put on the Character of a Servant, and not only, without the smallest Defect, paid an exact Obedience to the moral Law, which has essential and natural Holiness: But also subjected himself to all the whole uneasy Load of Rituals and ceremonial Institutions, which were observed in the Jewish Church, and thus *fulfilled all Righteousness.*

And notwithstanding of the excellent Riches of his glorious Kingdom which ruled over all, when he descended upon Earth, he, as it were, laid aside the Sceptre, gave up the Reins of Government, and became a Subject to the *Roman Empire*: Nor had *Cesar* any within his Dominions more constantly submissive to his lawful Authority; for he always paid a due Regard to it in his own Practice, and recommended Obedience to others, so that he wrought a Miracle rather than fail in giving Tribute. And as a Son he subjected himself to his earthly Parents.

And then, though, notwithstanding the Disguise of his Flesh, he was in Reality *God's King upon his holy Hill of Zion*, and had a Right to the Dominion; yet how few paid Allegiance to their heavenly Sovereign. *He came to his own who received him not*: Yea, Neglect, Contempt and Reproach, took up the Place which ought to have been filled with Praises, Adoration and Obedience. Never did a Prince banished from his Throne by the Fury of rebellious Subjects, robbed of his Authority, and forced to wander unknown amongst insulting Strangers, make a meaner external Appearance, and less suitable to the Dignity of his Birth and Throne, than Jesus, when *for your sakes he became poor*; for though he was *Heir of all Things*, yet as it is, *Matth. viii. 20. The Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had Nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay his Head.*

3dly. Jesus Christ was rich in the Number and Splendor of his Attendants: You know that a magnificent Equipage and pompous Appearance of Servants dazzle the Eyes of the Multitude upon Earth, and are accounted a Proof of Riches. Now
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our Redeemer's Throne was ever crowded by Throngs of Cherubs and Seraphs, those noble and beautiful Ministers of his Pleasure, who run with Delight in obeying his Command, and rejoyce to fight against his Enemies, or adorn his Triumphs: Thousands of Angels ministred to him in Heaven, and ten Thousand times ten Thousand stood before him, every way becoming the Riches and the State of the King. Christ is rich, when he is admired and adored by such noble Creatures, that have so much Glory and Beauty and excel in Strength, who all bow their Heads, and with the most submissive Reverence worship at his Footstool, and constantly sing to his Praise.

But the *Messiah* herein became poor. His Parents were so extremely low in their Circumstances, that they had no Room even for their first born Son in the Inn, but were obliged to lay him in a Manger: And surely, nothing else about him could be pompous, when proportioned to such a despicable Lodging. Ah! how surprising a Difference betwixt the Glory and Honour of the heavenly *Zion*, which had been his eternal Habitation, and the Meanness and Contempt of his Cradle? And when he began his publick Work amongst Men, he was not followed by a numerous and splendid Retinue, his most illustrious Disciples were Twelve poor despised Apostles, chosen from amongst the meanest of the People, Men who got their Bread by none of the genteelest Employments, Fishing. Publicans and Sinners were the chief of his Conversation, who enjoyed or valued his Company, while he was the Contempt of the rich and great, and without Regard from the Prince or the Philosopher: And the base and the foolish

Things of the World were his only Followers, while he was the Scorn of the wise and Disputers, and had no Esteem of the knowing and polite. And it is remarkable, that, when at his Transfiguration upon the Mount, his Disciples beheld him clothed with his native Light and Glory, yet, that he might behave every way suitable to the Poverty of his State upon Earth, he did not blaze abroad the Splendor and Riches of that Appearance, but commanded his Disciples that they should tell the Vision to no Man till he was risen from the Dead, when he was for ever to re-ascend his Throne, and clothe himself with his former Honour.

4thly. Which adds to the Riches of his Power and Dominion, his Understanding is infinite. *The Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are hid with him*; he has not faint dark Views of Things, who is the wonderful Counsellor; he can never mistake and err in Judgment, for he knoweth the Hearts of Men, and the most retired Thoughts of the subtlest Devil are pierced into by his Eye: He is that substantial Wisdom by which the Lord founded the Earth, the Understanding whereby he established the Heavens. And how inconceivably rich must he be, who has unbounded Power and Rule managed by the highest Understanding, and *of whose Times Wisdom and Knowledge are the Stability*. Thus he is for ever freed from the Disadvantages which attend the most penetrating Politicians here below, the torturing Cares that their short Reach occasions them, who are often deceived and outwitted, or tormented from Fear of being so.

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With respect to his infinite Understanding *he became poor* : For though *the Gospel be the Wisdom and Power of God*, it is only to them that believe : And his Doctrine and whole Conduct, to outward Appearance, were Foolishness, as they were reputed by the learnedest Men then in the World, the *Greeks* ; and indeed at first View a great many Things in it looked that Way, hence the Apostle *Paul speaks of the Foolishness of Preaching*. And did not Christ's Knowledge seem to be under a Cloud, while he was admired only by some of the more ignorant People, and while the base and the foolish Things of this World were his Followers ; but the wise, and the Disputers, the Philosophers, ridiculed his Religion as absurd and unreasonable ? Did he not seem poor with respect to his Understanding, while he had not the Esteem of the knowing and polite, but spent much of his Time with Publicans, and such mean Officers who were ignorant of any valuable Learning, and did appear capable to entertain him if his Soul was above their Level ? Again when Christ appeared before *Pilate* to answer in an Accusation, where the Punishment of the Guilt was capital, and so it was to be supposed that a Man would stretch himself and exert all his Abilities, that by a noble Defence he might engage the Governor's Favour and preserve himself : Yet we find *he answered not a Word* ; and suffered his Enemies to lay the vilest and most odious Crimes to his Charge, without wiping off these Aspersions thrown upon him. *He did not cry, nor lifted up, and caused not his Voice to be heard in the Street*. Now in all these, and many more Instances, *he became poor with respect to his Knowledge and Understanding*.

I shall not enter upon any other Head, but conclude with a few Inferences from what hath been discoursed.

1. Hence we may see the infinite Freedom and Mercy of Christ in his unmerited Love to Sinners: That it was only the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that moved him to *become poor for our sakes*; and that it was the most generous and disinterested Kindness towards us, which made him, when he saw us *lying wallowing in our own Blood, to pity us, and say unto us, Live,* and throw over us the Garment of everlasting loving Kindness. There was nothing on our Parts to induce him thereto, for we were sunk as low as Hell, wretched, abandoned Transgressors to Blindness and Ignorance, given over to vile Affections, and Slaves to the basest Lusts; we were *from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of our Foot full of Wounds, Bruises and putrifying Sores*, in every respect loathsome, and covered over with our Shame and Pollution: And then, as to himself, he was rich, and possessed all, he could gain no Accession to his Happiness by saving us, nor would our Misery have diminished his Bliss or sullied his Honour; yea, he could have been glorious in our Ruin, and his Justice, and the Perfection of his Purity might have been manifested through the endless Ages in our righteous Punishments; his Power and his mighty Arm would have been shewn in thrusting us into Hell and lashing us, as well as it is now by raising us to Heaven, and filling us with the Rivers of its Pleasures. I may apply to this Purpose, what is said, *Job xxii. 2, 3. Can a Man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any Pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it Gain*

Gain to him, that thou makest thy Ways perfect? Or did our Saviour stand in the least need of our poor Services, when his Throne was surrounded by so many Millions of pure Angels, these exalted Spirits, who were ever cheerful in their Worship and unwearied in their Obedience? Or did he want to smell a good Savour from our Sacrifices, when he had the unmixed Incense of Love and of Praise from the Cherub and Seraph? How ought we to admire the Riches, the Glory, and Freedom of his Grace, to ascribe all the Honour to his Name, and say, Not unto us, Lord, but unto thee be the Praise?

2dly. We have here a very lively Proof of the infinite Greatness and unbounded Extent, as well as of the Freedom, of Christ's Love and Compassion; and that it passeth all created Understanding. A rich Man acquires the Character of a charitable and merciful Disposition, if he let fall the Remains of his Affluence upon the Wants of others, though he do not impoverish himself to supply them: But our Redeemer not only was a Source of inexhausted Goodness, and numberless Benefits to us; but, when nothing else could promote our Happiness, he emptied himself of his Riches and Glory, and became poor that we might be made rich; he was exposed to the Reproach and Scorn of Sinners, that we might be freed from everlasting Shame and Contempt; he became obedient to the Death, that we might be *Light and Life in the Lord*; he was made *Sin*, that we through him might become the *Righteousness of God*; and was himself without Form or Comeliness, that he might beautifie us with Salvation, and crown our Heads with Glory and Joy. I. *John iii. 16.* *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he*
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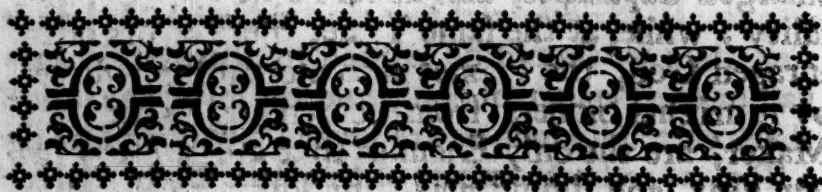
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laid down his Life for us : Our Saviour tells us, *John xv. 13. Greater Love hath no Man than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends,* and yet we are this Day celebrating the Praises of infinitely brighter and nobler Love, we are commemorating the Sufferings of a Redeemer, who underwent the most painful Death for his Enemies, who, by their wicked Works, had declared that *they would not have him to reign over them,* and who, the Moment he made his Soul an Offering for their Sins, had the Weapons of their Rebellion lifted up in their Hands, whereby they fought against his holy Kingdom. Surely it is, in a very special Manner, our Duty, upon such an Occasion as this, to remember his Love, and have our Hearts filled with Wonder, and our Mouths with loudest Songs of the sincerest Gratitude to our glorious Deliverer. It is a chief sacramental Grace, and we ought to be stirred up to it when we consider *his Riches,* and that *for our sakes he became poor,* to be giving our Hearts and our Love to him who died for us, all our Souls ought to be kindled into a Flame of divine Love, and the Meditation hereof should be as Fuel to this heavenly Fire, to make it burn still brighter till we come to dwell in the Love of Christ, and be as full of it as we can hold. We may be astonished at our stupid rocky Hearts, that are so little moved with the Sufferings and Grace of a Saviour ; we should be ashamed that we are so cold and languishing, and strive to *mount up with Wings as Eagles,* till we love him as well as the glorified Spirits now do in Heaven ; and earnestly beg of God, that he would work the same Miracle in our Souls, which his Presence produced in the *Bush,* to make us all burn with a
Fire

Fire of Love to Christ, never to be extinguished or grow colder.

3dly. If Christ became poor that we might be made rich, then we should be excited to a merciful compassionate Temper of Soul, and to love one another, especially such as are joyned by so endearing a Tie, as to be Members of the same Body, whereof Christ is the Head. This is so noble a Relation, that it ought to swallow up all little Differences or Debates, and none of them ought to interrupt the sincerest Affection amongst such: This is what we profess to resolve on and practise, when sitting down at the Lord's Table, which is the Communion of Saints, and a Sacrament of Love to our Redeemer, and to all such as are his Followers: And it is the Inference which the Apostle draws from the Argument I have been discoursing upon, I. John iv. 9, 10, 11. *In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*





S E R M O N IX.

II. COR. viii. 9. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.*



THERE is no View which we can place true Religion in, but we may behold it full of such divine Beauties as ought to attract the Love of every rational Soul: The Obedience it requires, is due by the most indisputed Obligations to that God who called us out of nothing by his Power, and raised us from a more melancholy State of Sin and Misery by his Grace, which endureth for ever; and none of his Commandments are grievous, but all of them suitable to the Nature and Dignity of our Spirits: The Rewards which it proposes are infinitely worthy

worthy of our Pursuit, being as vast as our most enlarged Capacities, and as lasting as our Immortality; while, at the same Time, the Terrors of an enraged God, the Flames of an eternal Fire whereby it frights Sinners from contending with their Maker, are the only Enemies that are worthy of our Fear, and should make our Joynts to tremble. So that *Godliness is profitable in all Things*, all its Ways are Pleasantness and perfect Peace, and in every respect it merits our Esteem and Affection: Yet there are some peculiar Parts of Christianity which are in a special manner excellent and amiable, and are distinguished by a superior Lustre of Goodness and Grace, the Beauties whereof recommend them to our Choice. Every Thing in the Ways of God should kindle our Hearts with the heavenly Fire of Love to him, who is the Author and Finisher of our Faith, but some of them are peculiarly fitted to blow it up into a vehement Flame, and animate us with the utmost Vigor and Life in running the Race set before us; and such Things ought to be the most frequent Subject of our endearing Meditation, and they are the most profitable Considerations our Thoughts can be employed about.

Upon which account I have made Choice of the Words now read to "discourse upon a little to you, through divine Assistance, there being no Argument that hath greater Force to raise our Esteem, and stir up our Gratitude, to enliven our Religion, and allure our Affection, than *the Grace of Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his Poverty might become rich.*

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The holy Apostle Paul, in this Chapter, exhorts the *Corinthians* to a liberal unconstrained Charity towards poorer Saints, whose narrow Circumstances rendered them fit Objects of their Christian Sympathy and Assistance: And he excites them to the Practice hereof by several Considerations, such as the noble Example of the *Macedonians*, who, by the Frankness and Largeness of their Charity, gave them an illustrious Example of Christian Generosity; by setting which before them, in the first six Verses, he stirs them up to a commendable Emulation of their Virtue: Then he proposes to their Thoughts the considerable Progress they themselves had already made in the spiritual Life, *abounding in Faith, Utterance, Knowledge, Diligence, and Love*, which was a great Encouragement to them in the Performance of every other Duty, and ought to make them ashamed of the Thoughts of falling short in this of Charity.

And then, in my Text, he lays before them, of all others, the incomparably most moving Argument, which is indeed the powerful Spring of every Part of Christian Obedience, but hath a special Vigor and Life with respect to this Duty of Charity, *namely*, the amazing Wonders of Grace and Love which a Redeemer wrought for us, who did and suffered infinitely more to make wretched Transgressors happy, than they could perform for the relieving of their distressed Brethren. Which Words may be shortly divided into these Parts.

I. We have the glorious State of the Saviour of Men before he took on him their Nature, and tabernacled in Flesh, *he was rich*, possessed of every

very Excellency that could heighten his Majesty, and raise his Happiness.

2. We have the surprising Change of his Condition when he descended into this lower World; that he might be a *Captain of Salvation perfect through Sufferings*, he became poor, veiled over the Glory of a heavenly King with the *Form of a Servant*, under which he endured the most sinful Contradiction of Sinners against himself, and became obedient to the Death of the Cross.

3dly. We have the great Design of this adorable Grace, and the Persons who were the Objects of it, *for our sakes, and that we through his Poverty might be rich.* Abandoned Sinners who were viler than the Dog in his Vomit, or the Sow wallowing in the Mire, who had Claim to nothing but everlasting Shame and endless Misery, whose only Merit was the Vengeance of eternal Fire, and the Fury of their provoked Sovereign: Were yet the Persons on whom God bestowed his only Son, and he gave himself that he might redeem them from all Iniquity, and by one Sacrifice of himself for ever might perfect them that are sanctified. He himself, you see, was rich, and so wanted nothing to increase the Treasures of his Glory and Bliss: And God his Father could not have been injured by our Folly, nor his Honour tarnished by our eternal Continuance in Misery; for as he is not profited by our Righteousness, so what can our Iniquities do against our Maker? It was not for his sake Christ became poor: God could have been glorified in our Hell as well as he is now exalted in our Heaven; for there his Hand finds out all his Enemies, his right Hand finds out them that hate him, and he is clothed with awful Majesty in these dreadful
Parts

Parts of his Dominions, where he rides prosperously in Triumph over the Necks of conquered Rebels. And then *Jesus took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham*. So that all the Blood of a dying Saviour, and every Tear and Grone while he lived upon Earth, run towards Mankind and center in their Happiness: They are shed that we might be made *rich*, beautified with the Ornaments of Innocency, and restored to the Glory of our original Purity and the Favour of our Maker; he became *the Author of eternal Salvation to all who obey him*.

4thly. We have the Source from which alone all these Mysteries of Compassion flow. The only Argument which moved him to this was *Grace*, *ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

And lastly. We have the Connexion betwixt the foregoing *Verses* and our Text, which is brought in by the Apostle as an Argument to Charity.

This Text, you see, is very comprehensive and contains a Variety of Subjects which might be profitably discoursed upon *. I had Occasion, in this Place, to speak to Part of them, when I made several Observations from the Connexion betwixt the foregoing Part of the *Chapter* and our Text. I also opened up the Meaning of Christ's being *rich and becoming poor*, and laid before you some of those glorious Excellencies wherein our Lord, before he took upon him the Character of our Saviour, was *rich*; and shewed that, with respect to each of those Perfections, *he became poor for our sakes*: And I concluded with some practical Inferences from what had been said. I shall now proceed

* See the preceeding Sermon, Pag. 162.

ceed to shew, in some more Instances, that our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.

5thly. When speaking of the Riches of Christ, I cannot pass by the Perfection of his Purity. Holiness is the brightest Excellency of a Spirit, and its most valuable Possession: It is, in the only proper Sense, both the Beauty and Riches of a Soul, and the most delightful Attribute of God himself, who is glorious in the Beauties of Holiness. Now our Redeemer was eminently distinguished by this Part of his Riches, being *holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from Sinners*, because of the Perfection of his Nature: *He loved Righteousness and hated Iniquity; and the Sceptre of his Kingdom was a Sceptre of Righteousness*: In short, he is the great Pattern, and proposed to us as the Exemplar of true Holiness; for when we are commanded to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect, and to be Followers of Christ, the same Measure and Standard is given us.

And I am sure, when meditating upon the unspotted Innocence of our Saviour, I may address every one of us in the Words of our Text, *You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor*. This holy Lamb of God was, during his Life, calumniated as a Glutton and Wine-bibber, traduced as a Lover of Sedition and a factious Enemy to all Religion and Government; and at last was crucified betwixt two Thieves, as a more notorious Sinner than either of them. All this was indeed only the Judgment of ignorant foolish Men, and the Noise of a blinded Multitude, which makes the Evil less considerable: But herein lies the My-

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tery of Grace, which astonishes the Understandings of Angels, and ought surely at the same Time to fill our Hearts with a wondring Gratitude, that God his Father *numbred this Messiah amongst the Transgressors, and made him Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we through him might be made the Righteousness of God.* In how affecting a manner did he become poor, when he laid aside the Garment of his own unspotted Innocence, which was a Safe-guard from Punishment, clothed himself with the Guilt of all our Sins, and that under the Form of a Transgressor, was bruised for our Iniquities, the Chastisement of our Peace came upon him, and by his Stripes were we healed. And, that he might purchase for us the Joys of Immortality, was compassed about by the Sorrow of Hell, which took hold of him; and Death, which was the Wages of no Service but that of Sin, became the Portion of him whose Life was never sullied with the smallest Impurity.

I might, in the *sixth Place*, lay before you at length the Riches of Pleasure and Happiness, those inexhausted Treasures of Joy and Satisfaction, which the Son of God our Saviour possessed from Eternity, in the ineffable Relation which he had to the Father, and the endearing Communion which resulted thence. But who can declare these Mysteries? This we are assured of, that they are full of Bliss and Delight, though *the Glory which he had with the Father before the World was,* must still be incomprehensible by finite Minds, when, as it is *Prov. viii. 30. He was by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his Delight, rejoicing always before him.*

I might

I might shew at large how in this respect *he became poor for your sakes.* It is true, that Relation was not dissolved; for, it being founded in the divine Nature, it must in all Cases remain inviolable, and be a Truth more stable than the Heavens or Earth, that *the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father*: But then, as to his outward Circumstances, it seemed to be otherwise; this Union betwixt them was clouded and darkned, and he appeared in this World rather like *the Son of Joseph a Carpenter*, than with the Majesty and Greatness of *the only begotten of the Father*. The Penman of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, that *when God brought him into the World*, he proclaimed it in Heaven, *let all the Angels of God worship him*; and this Honour necessarily followed from his eternal Generation, thence he was *the King of Angels and Men*: But, while on Earth, as he was despised and rejected of Sinners, and exposed to the Temptations of Devils, so the holy Spirits in Heaven did not openly adore him, but when we read that they came and ministered unto our Saviour, we find they did it in private, as after his Temptation in the Wilderness, and during his Agony in the Garden. Now, can we conceive greater Poverty, than for one who stood in so ineffably near and glorious a Relation to the Father, to become *the Son of Man*, and be reputed to spring from no higher an Original? When in some Measure he put this off, and was clothed with the Brightness and Light he had eternally been surrounded with, when transfigured in the Mount before three of his Disciples, he so fully answered what the Apostle in our Text asserts of him, that *though he was rich, he became poor*, that

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he did not blaze that glorious Change abroad in the World, but charged his Disciples that they should tell the *Vision to no Man*, till he was raised from the Dead, and should again appear as the *Brightness of his Father's Glory*, and the express Image of his Person. And indeed, considering these Circumstances, and the shameful Death he was at last exposed to, which seemed to the Wise and Learned of this Earth, altogether inconsistent with his being so intimately united to the almighty Ruler of the World, upon whom all Events depended, it was natural enough reasoning, from such as were not spiritually enlightened to discern this Mystery, which we find the *Jews* had while he was hanging on the Cross, *Matth. xxvii. 40. Thou that destroyest the Temple and buildest it in three Days, save thy self; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross:* And his remaining under the Dominion of Death seemed to look so like being abandoned by God, that his own Disciples were wavering, and doubting if he could be possessed of that Character; so, after his Resurrection, when he appeared to the Disciples going to *Emmaus*, *Cleophas* having told him that the chief Priests had procured the *Messiah's* Condemnation, he adds, as if now they thought that Belief ill grounded, *but we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.*

Further, as to his human Nature, he in a very remarkable manner *became poor*, and was deserted of God as to all sensible Influences of Comfort and Pleasure. He, 'tis true, had as much of these Communications as were necessary to support him under his infinite Sufferings, that he might neither be crushed altogether by their Weight, nor hur-

hurried into the least Thought unbecoming his perfect Holiness and Submission to the Will of God: But then he was deprived of what might contribute to his Ease and Joy, or the least Abatement of his Poverty. To such as know any Thing of the unspotted Purity of Jesus Christ, of his invincible Courage and Greatness of Mind, whereby he despised all the Reproach, Disgrace and Affronts that were heaped on him by the *Jewish* Priests, and an insulting furious Mob, which Things oft subdue the most resolute of Men, how great must the Desertion appear, and how intire the Suspension of the Joy and Bliss, which was the Result of this Relation to God as *his only Son*, when it made our Saviour cry out upon the Cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* When we consider his Patience and Resignation to all the Providences of God towards him, this Complaint must be a Demonstration of the Depth of his Poverty and Humiliation, in opposition to his former Riches and exalted State, which consisted in the incomprehensible Dignity, Happiness and Glory in his being the eternal and only begotten of the Father.

7thly. Another very affecting Part of Christ's Humiliation is, that, though he was the great Prophet of the Church, *who spake as never Man spake, and Grace was poured out into his Lips*, though he be the only Fountain of all spiritual Benefits, and it is from these Wells of Salvation in him that all the Inhabitants of *Zion* draw the Waters of endless Life: Yet when he dwelt in this lower World, he stretched out his Hands all Day long to a gainsaying People, there were few who believed the

Report, and his publick Ministry was extremely unsuccessful.

After the Exaltation of our Saviour, and the Effusion of the holy Spirit, when he was possessed of his former Riches, whereby he was rich unto all, Thousands of Sinners were made Partakers of his Grace, and the blind, empty, miserable Souls of Men were converted to Christianity, and filled with divine Knowledge, Holiness and Bliss, and translated from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Obedience of Christ; then the Salvation and Happiness of numerous Converts were the Riches and Fulness of our exalted Prince and Saviour, one of his Apostles, by a single Sermon, converted many more to Righteousness, than Christ seems to have gained himself by all his Labour, and Preaching, and Example. Now this is a very affecting Instance of Christ's Poverty, when he was clouded both as to his own essential Perfections, and as to the Glory of his liberal Communications of all Grace and Good to others; for it is observed, that there was scarce ever an Age of the World wherein Men were more stupid and wicked, and fewer really pious to be found, than during the Time of Christ's tabernacling amongst Men, and God's peculiar People, the Jews, were then as deep sunk as others in the common Degeneracy. In short, if, as it is *1. Thess. ii. 19.* those whom Paul had been instrumental in turning unto God, would be *his Hope, his Joy, his Glory and Crown of rejoycing in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming*, it is certain that an ardent Zeal for the Glory of God and the Good of Souls, was infinitely more vehement in our Lord than in the best of his Followers, and the Pleasure he felt

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in the Salvation of his Children whom God had given him, was among the chiefest of his Joys ; how inconceivable a Degree then of Humiliation must it have been to him, when he was so often grieved at the Hardness of his Hearers Hearts, and the Deafness of their uncircumcised Ears, saw all his affectionate Instructions and moving Exhortations so much lost upon a perverse Generation, was put to lament their obstinate Folly, and groined up the Sorrows wherewith his Heart was swelled, because, though he would have many a time gathered them as a Hen doth her Chickens under her Wings, yet they would not ? And Oh ! how poor did the lovely Jesus become, when a Robber and a Murderer was preferred to him by those very Monsters whom he came to save ? *Be astonished at this, O ye Heavens ! my Soul, be thou horribly afraid !*

8thly. Jesus Christ was rich in the Eternity and Stability of his Being and Excellency. He was the King immortal : And had not only an unchangeable Life, for as the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself ; but was the great Author of Life and Being to all Creatures, and had also an absolute Power over the Keys of Hell and of Death, so that he could kill or keep alive, save or destroy. Now ye know the Grace of Jesus Christ, how, in this respect, for your sakes he became poor. The Terrors of Death surrounded him, and the Sorrows of Hell took hold of him ; he had to grapple with that cruel Monster, and seemed for a Time to be conquered by it. What an amazing State of the lowest Poverty, that should break your very Hearts, was our Redeemer subjected unto, when Death, one of his own Slaves, in the most shameful and loathsom Appearance, seized up-

on him, brought him under the accursed Dominion of the Grave? When he saved others, he was insulted and laughed at for his being unable to save himself; and *the Prince of Life was with wicked Hands crucified and slain*, so that all the rich Treasures of Dominion, Life and Salvation that were in him, appeared utterly emptied and destroyed.

In the last Place, tho' Jesus Christ, as the second Person of the glorious Trinity, became poor by his engaging in the Office of the *Messiah*, and his becoming our Surety was a Part of his Humiliation, as I have already shewed: Yet as Mediator he was rich, having Grace poured into his Lips, and *all the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him*; and for our sakes he became poor, in being deprived as to his human Nature of these Pleasures and Enjoyments: For his whole Life was a Series of Afflictions and Sufferings from Devils and Men. I shall not insist upon them, nor on the Infirmities of his Body, Diseases and Pains, because I have already in some Measure laid these open: But it will not be unfit to take some further Views of what he bore immediately from God, when *he bruised him for our Iniquities*, wherein all his other Grievs were swallowed up.

I know some who keep the Name, though they deny the Nature, of Christianity, *Socinians* and others who oppose the Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction for our Sins, make no great Account of what God immediately inflicted upon the *Messiah*: But they, in doing so, utterly frustrate all the valuable Purposes of Jesus Christ's coming into the World; for upon this complete Sacrifice, and his bearing the Punishment of our Iniquities, depends all our Hope of Heaven and Pardon.

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When we are about to meditate upon this great Subject, we ought to discover in it the infinite Evils and abominable Nature of Sin, the fearful and terrible Wrath of God against the Workers of it, and the incomprehensible Grace of Jesus Christ in this last and lowest Part of his Poverty for our sakes. These Sufferings of Christ immediately from God his Father, must have been, beyond our Thought, severe and intolerable, when the Views of them made our Saviour, who so much delighted to accomplish his Work upon Earth, address his Father with the greatest Earnestness, that *if it were possible this Cup might pass from him.* Such as make this pathetick Desire proceed from nothing beside the Prospect which our Lord had of the cruel and shameful Death he was to undergo, and the Scorn and Contempt the Jews and Roman Soldiers were to treat him with, little consult the Honour of our Redeemer, or the Dignity of his Sufferings, and the divine Holiness vindicated by them: Do not such debase the exalted elevated Soul of Jesus Christ, in making him shrink, and, with such Emotion, recoil at the Thought of these Sufferings? They were indeed great and heavy, but, considered barely as proceeding from Men, were not more grievous than those which many Martyrs have undergone for his Names sake without fainting or languishing: And *can the Servant be greater than his Lord?* Or can the Disciples be more calm and sedate upon the Cross than their Master? How could the Beauty of Christ's Example shine so brightly, as to be proposed to us as the inimitable perfect Pattern of an heroick disinterested Soul, raised above the fading Pleasures and short Pains of a present

sent World, if his outward Pains from Men made him pray with such Fervour, that *this Cup might pass from him?* He had certainly Torments of a vastly higher Nature, when he offered up his Soul a Sacrifice for Sin, when the Sorrows of Hell compassed him about, and the Snares of Death prevented him.

Thus the Sufferings of Christ were a Proof that it was no small Matter to expiate Sin, that they were real, and not to be represented by Pictures and Images, as they are in a scandalous theatrical Manner by the Papists. Let this awful Demonstration of the Terribleness of God's Wrath, when he spared not his own Son, engage us to consider the dreadful State of impenitent Transgressors, who have fallen into the Hands of the living God. Did the Father so severely avenge his broken Law upon Christ, who, though he bare our Guilt, was innocent in his own Nature, as to make him, who was united into one Person with the Godhead, and supported thereby, to sink so far under his Sufferings as to be heavy, and exceeding sorrowful even unto Death; tho' he could not but be sure that they would last but a little while, and then he should be crowned with Glory and Honour: How must the damned in Hell be crushed by his almighty Arm? And how intense and sharp must be their Pains, who stand in no other Relation to God but that of Traitors and Rebels, who are hated as well as punished by him, and have no hopes of Ease, but are assured that their Fire shall not be quenched? Let the Consideration of these Things engage us to accept of the great Salvation, that so we may flee from the Wrath to come, and have our Maker for our Friend and Portion.

Thus

Thus I have endeavoured in some Measure to explain how our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet became poor. His Grace and Love herein ought to make us love and admire him; to endear him to our Souls, and place him highest in their Esteem and Affection, though we were not immediately benefited thereby; as we see the Angels joyn with Saints in adoring and celebrating the Mystery of the Gospel, this Good-will towards Men. But our Hearts should burn with the more fervent Love to him, when we consider the Third Thing I proposed to discourse upon from these Words, *namely*, that he who was rich and exalted, humbled himself and became poor for the Benefit and Advantage of Men. Where I shall principally consider the Influence that his Poverty had upon our Salvation, and the Fittedness or Necessity of it in order to the Accomplishment thereof: And I shall illustrate this, 1. By shewing that there are no other Beings who have such a Claim to the Design of Christ's becoming poor. 2dly. By proving *positively and directly*, the Influence it has to the bringing about of our eternal Happiness.

1. He did not become poor to confirm and increase his own Happiness and Glory. Had God procured any Advantage thereby, it might have been thought that his Sufferings were not principally designed for our sake: But what does our Righteousness profit God, or contribute to his Satisfaction, it was eternal and incomprehensible when there was no Being beside himself; and can we fancy the Sins and Misery of Men would have disquieted their Maker, and disturbed his Repose? So far from that, he could not only have immediately

ately sent us to that nothing whence we were called by the Word of his Power, but *the Wrath of Man praises him*, and his Justice and Holiness shine in the eternal Punishment of Devils and Men, and he rides triumphing and prosperously over his Enemies in Hell, as his Compassions flow in Heaven: So that our Inquiries do nothing unto him; the withdrawing of our Obedience does not lessen his Power, for *is there any Number of his Armies?* Amongst Men, it is impossible we can do any Favour for another, but we really at the same Time do a Kindness to our selves: For the richest and most powerful may stand in need of the Help, and be, one Time or another, assisted by the poorest Object of their Charity; and he's a Fool who contemns the meanest Person, so as to think there may not happen such Circumstances, wherein he may not be supported or injured by him. But Christ's becoming poor, is altogether unmerited, and can never be rewarded, 'tis for our sakes in the most disinterested Sense: For he is not capable of being in need of or receiving any Return from us: But, as he was of himself all-sufficient when he tabernacled amongst Men, so the Perfection of his Nature proved that he must continue eternally and unchangeably so, without the least Diminution. But

2dly. If we consider even the human Nature of Christ, it was not for its own but for our sakes he became poor. This might be made good with respect to the several Instances wherein I have illustrated the Poverty of Jesus Christ, but I shall only mention these two.

1. As

1. As to his Sufferings and the Punishment inflicted on him, he was of himself innocent, without the least Spot or Defect, *holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from Sinners.* Now Punishment supposes always Guilt, and he that fulfils the Law and does not transgress it, can ly under no Obligation to the Punishment; 'tis a Sinner who has Reason to be afraid that the threatening in the Law will be executed upon him, but in a pure Soul there can be no Fear of or Liableness to Wrath: So that Christ, even as he was Man, voluntarily took upon him our Nature and our Sins, he bore the Transgressions of his People while he himself had observed all the Words of the Law to do them; and was not in the same Case with the high Priest who was a Type of him, mentioned *Heb. ix. 7.* But into the second Tabernacle went the high Priest alone once every Year, not without Blood, which he offered for himself and for the Errors of the People. So that though God is said to have laid upon him the Iniquities of us all, yet it was not by Force and Constraint, but from his own Agreement and Consent. A Sinner's feeling the Fruits of his own Doings, and being made poor temporally and spiritually, can never merit any Return, because his Transgressions make it his Due: But Christ by becoming poor for our sakes, has got an excellent Reward, *a Name above every Name,* because he voluntarily humbled himself, and became obedient to the Death, even the Death of the Cross.

2. The Messiah's Subjection to the divine Law was for our sakes, for, besides its being the Obedience of the Person who was the Son of God, which gives it an infinite Value, it was so even with respect to the human Nature; for, though

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as a Creature of God's it was from its self under eternal Obligations to its Maker's Will, yet it was only to the moral Law, not the ceremonial or judicial Precepts, being perfectly holy. It was the Part of Christ as Man to love God and serve him with a spiritual Worship, but he could no ways be bound by the ceremonial Law, which has a respect to Men as Sinners: Circumcision, the Passover, &c. were calculated only for polluted Creatures, but were of no Use or Necessity to such as were innocent; but Christ bore the whole Load of the Law, he was circumcised, attended the Passover and all the other Feasts, and the whole Temple-service, and submitted to all the numerous Rites and Ceremonies without any Defect or Exemption from the least of them, but fulfilled them all, that he might be a perfect high Priest and Captain of our Salvation: So that his being made of a Woman, and, this way made under the Law, was for our sakes, that he might for us bring in an everlasting Righteousness.

Hence, by the by, we may take notice, how good Grounds there are, and how solid a Foundation we have for the Imputation of Christ's active as well as of his passive Obedience or Sufferings, and how weak the Cavils are against it, from Christ's human Nature's being a Creature of God's: For we see here, in all respects, he was under no Obligation, except for our sakes, to the Obedience of the Law in this low Manner, and bordered with such positive ceremonial Institutions.

Thus we see that Christ did not become poor upon his own account, with respect either to his divine or human Nature. But,

In the second Place, it was not for Angels that he humbled himself. The apostate Spirits do not at all partake of his Purchase, but are reserved in everlasting Chains of Darkness to the Judgment of the great Day: Christ will be exalted to be their Judge and Condemner, but was never debased to be their Saviour; and, while we have Grace and Glory purchased for us by him, the Devils will never to Eternity feel the enlivening blessed Influences of a Redeemer, but they are irretrievably without God and without Hope. Nor were the blessed Angels, who kept their first Habitation, the Cause of our Lord's leaving his Riches and Glory; they were ever united to God in Love and holy Obedience, had no Guilt to be satisfied for, no Pollution and Filth to be washed away, for they were as pure as God required them to be: So that though the Mediator cements all in one that are God's Servants, and gathers the Angels, and his Saints from amongst Men, into one happy Society; yet it was notwithstanding for our sakes that he became poor, for he took not upon him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham.

I should now proceed to the other Part of this Head, namely, to shew directly and positively the Influence that Christ's Poverty has upon our Salvation, and the Necessity and Fittedness of it for the attaining of that End: * But, because the going through this would take up too much of your Time, I shall shut up this Discourse by drawing some Inferences from what has been said upon

* The Sermon which he preached afterwards upon this Subject is not found amongst his Papers.

upon this Proposition, namely, that *Christ Jesus became poor for our sakes.*

1. Here is a plentiful Source of the most excellent Comfort and Encouragement to true Believers, who are willing to take Christ's Yoke upon them, and depend upon God in him for their All. This may support and bear them up, in the most difficult discouraging Circumstances they can possibly be placed in. Beside the divine Authority thereof, it is highly rational which we have *Rom. viii. 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things?* Will he bestow upon any the greatest Blessing, and his dearest Gift, his own Son, and withhold lesser Enjoyments and Advantages that may be for their good? This were altogether inconsistent with him whose Understanding is infinite. Will he suffer such to sink under their Troubles, to be overcome by Satan and his Temptations, for whom Christ died? Or shall he not rather make them more than Conquerors over all their Enemies, for whom he did what was infinitely greater, the debasing of his Son and making him poor for our sakes? No; this must be a Proof that *all Things shall work together for Good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his Purpose.* If you then be *Followers of the Lamb*, comfort your selves with these Words. If you are loaded with Troubles, and forsaken of Friends, do Diseases in the Body and disquieting Anxiety in the Mind afflict you, and make your Lives uneasie, and are you overwhelmed with the Fears of what is to come, and the Prospect of narrow straitning Circumstances; bear up your Souls, and argue thus, Was God so infinitely good as to send his

own Son in the Likeness and Fashion of Men? Did he condescend so low as to be clothed with all our Infirmities and Diseases, to bear the Father's Wrath, and make an Atonement for our Transgressions? And have we not Ground to hope that he will protect us in the most difficult State, and turn to our Advantage what seems in our Views so much to our Hurt, bruise Satan under our Feet, and at length bring us to that glorious State, where we may reap the full Advantages of Christ's *becoming poor*, and there praise him for his Grace?

2dly. We may hence see the inconceivable Danger these must be exposed to who neglect to believe in Christ, and accept of this great Salvation. Had Mankind been but a By-end of the *Messiah's* mediatorial Work, and some other Thing principally designed, we might fancy that God would easier pass over our not answering his Calls: But when our Happiness and being made rich was his chief Purpose, we hereby frustrate all the Grace, Wisdom, and Goodness, that God hath manifested in the Sacrifice of Christ, and will he not resent this Affront in the most terrible manner? This will sharpen God's Vengeance, and inflame his Fury. If it be true, and the Scripture assures us of its Certainty, that according to the Talents bestowed upon a Person his Judgment will be, and by the Number and Greatness of them, when abused, will the Condemnation be heightened, then, I am sure, the hottest Hell and heaviest Wrath will be the Portion of such who misimprove Christ bestowed upon them. God's Goodness is very consistent with his Justice, and in a Proportion to the Mercies shewn to Persons, he requires the

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greater Returns, or will inflict the more intense and sore Torments: So that if Christ's becoming poor for us be filled with infinite Grace, the not hearing his Voice and embracing his Offers, will kindle God's Vengeance and Wrath, and fill the Soul with the most intolerable consuming Heat thereof.

3dly. We may hence learn the invaluable Worth of our Souls, the great Care and Concern we should have not to ruine them, and our infinite Folly in minding them so little, and defiling them with the basest Lulls, when Christ put so great Value on them as to *become poor for their Behoof*.

4thly. My Friends, let it be our serious Endeavour to take a clear and lively View of this unparalleled Grace of Jesus Christ, and affect our Souls with a strong and lasting Sense of his Love, the Wonders whereof are higher than our most admiring Thoughts, and their Number past finding out. There is nothing so worthy of the Wonder and Contemplation of rational Creatures, as the incomparable Beauties of divine Mercy; into the Mysteries whereof the Angels pry with a delightful Amazement; and surely, they should dwell much more upon the Thoughts of those, who are the living Instances of these overflowing Compassions. Now the brightest Glory and the most attractive Amiableness of the divine loving Kindness, is represented in my Text by a Comparison of the two vastly different Conditions of Jesus Christ, his Riches and his Poverty: There is not the smallest Mite in these inexhaustible Treasures of Glory and Blessedness which belong to the almighty King of Ages, nor is there the least Step of his Humiliation who exchanged the
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eternal Throne for a tormenting ignominious Cross, none of the scornful Contradictions he endured, nor one Tear and Sigh of our compassionate Saviour, but what contribute their full Share to exalt the unbounded Excellency of God's Love; because the Distance betwixt his Riches and his Poverty is as high as Heaven, and as deep as Hell, there can be no measuring of *the Length, and Depth, and Breadth, and Height of the Love of God which passeth all Understanding.*

And as this Grace of God, is designed to furnish exuberant Matter for the eternal Hallelujahs of the redeemed, so we find that this illustrious Manifestation of it, in a Comparison of the exalted and the humbled State of Christ, will be for ever represented to the Eyes of Heaven; for our Saviour, amidst all his triumphant Glories above, will still preserve the Marks of his Sufferings, agreeable to the Vision which the Apostle John had of it, *Rev. v. 6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the Throne, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.* Lift up then, my Friends, your Eyes to that admirable Spectacle which all the Tribes of Heaven are beholding with unwearied Satisfaction, look to the most perfect Excellencies united with the lowest Abasement; behold the Glory of the Throne of Zion, all encircled with Saints and Angels prostrate before it, and yet possessed by *a Lamb as it had been slain*; behold all the Honours of the celestial World shining in your Redeemer's Face, see with what an humble and awful Submission the Seraphs bow before him, and the Myriads of angelical Hosts run with the utmost Pleasure in doing his Commandments, how joyfully all that Nation of Kings and Priests cast down their Crowns before

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his Throne, and are all flaming with an ardent Love to him: And yet be attentive to what he suffered upon Earth, to the Tears pouring from his weeping Eyes, and the Sighs sent forth by his oppressed Heart to Multitudes of insolent Sinners contradicting and persecuting him; while his few Disciples are fearful, and all Men are forsaking him, yea, the Father himself withdrawing his Comforts, and with the Sword of Justice smiting *the Man that was his Fellow*; and must they not be strangely stupid who will not be affected with such a Sight, and engaged, in some Measure, with the heavenly Hosts, to cry with a loud Voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing: Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* What a Monster must it be, whose Bowels will not be moved, and its Heart softened with Blood, Blood thus flowing from the Midst of a Throne?

5thly. As we should possess our Souls with the most elevated and grateful Thoughts of the Love of God, which appears from my Text in all the Mysteries of it, so let us be particularly careful to attain some suitable Apprehensions of this Love considered under the Notion of Grace. This is directly intended in the Words, *You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by which I understand the absolute Sovereignty and the unbounded Riches and Freedom of the divine Mercy, according to which all the Streams of Compassion flow from God himself; and there is nothing to give rise to them or to increase them, but the independent Excellency of his own Perfections. So that the whole

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whole unmixed Glory thereof terminates in God, from him alone they proceed, and to his Name, without a Partner, the Praises are to be given. This is *Grace*, and it is the great Design of the Gospel ; for the whole Mystery of Man's Redemption seems to have been calculated to manifest and exalt Grace in all its sovereign Glory. And indeed, every Part of this wonderful Contrivance of Salvation shines so brightly with the Beauties of Grace, that all along we may exclaim, *Grace, Grace*. The supreme Dominion of the blessed God, and his absolute Self-sufficiency and Independency, render all the Acts of his Love sovereign and free. The infinite Distance whereby he is exalted above all his Creatures, mixes an endearing Condescension with his Kindness and Patience : And the Emptiness of our apostate Condition, with our being naked and bare, destitute of the smallest Ornament or the least comely Feature, shew that there was nothing in us to incite or procure the divine Mercy, but that all the *Well-springs of Salvation* are to be found only in God himself.



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S E R M O N X.

ACTS xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*



WHATEVER might be the Person's Design who proposed it, 'tis beyond doubt a most important and necessary Question, which we find *the young Man* having to our Saviour, *Matth. xix. 16. Good Master, what good Thing shall I do that I may have eternal Life?* And though God and another World, the Way to be reconciled to our Maker and attain to the Resurrection of the just, be but very seldom in our Thoughts, the Pleasures and the Cares of this Life taking up too much of our Studies and Time, and leaving too little for the Meditation of our greatest Concerns, 'tis certainly the Height of Folly and Madness to dream away our Lives as if they were never to have an End, but as if these

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Tabernacles of Clay could remain an immortal Habitation for our Souls. It must be an undeniable Proof, obvious to the meanest Capacity, of the natural Weakness and Ignorance which all Men are sunk into, and that, like *Nabal*, *Folly is with us*, when, though Death is often seen in all its Shapes, and our Reason, and even our Senses, may convince us that there is no Discharge from this War, but that the Grave is *the House appointed for all living*: Yet they never seriously enquire what will be the End thereof? Where their Souls shall have their Abode after their Departure from this World? I am sure it is not a trifling or useless Question, whether we shall have God to be our Friend or our Enemy? If we shall walk in the Path of Life, and be made happy for ever with these Rivers of Pleasures that are at God's right Hand for evermore, or be banished into everlasting Darkness and Torment, *from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of his Power*?

It is therefore my Purpose at this Time to discourse a little to you concerning the great Mean of Salvation, how we may shun Misery and be secured of the highest Blessedness; and to lay open to you the Nature and Necessity of that *Faith, the End whereof is the Salvation of our Souls*. And here I shall endeavour not to perplex you or my self with any curious Enquiries, or the learned subtil Disputes that in all Ages have been raised upon this Subject; but, by the Assistance of God, I design to do it with as much Plainness and Easiness as I can, and the great Depth and Mysteriousness of this noble Subject will allow.

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The holy Apostle *Paul* was an eminent and successful Preacher of the Grace of Jesus Christ, and Justification by Faith in him: He had in a peculiar Degree very clear and full Revelations of the Mysteries of the Gospel, and, in unfolding them to others, as he himself informs us, he laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles. Agreeably hereto, we find the greatest Part of *the Acts of the Apostles* taken up in giving us an historical Account of the Ministry of *Paul*. This Chapter gives us an Account of a very notable Event which happened unto him at *Philippi*, where, having by the Power of his Master Jesus Christ driven a Spirit of Divination out of a Damsel possessed with it, he thereby extremely displeased her Masters, who, having made considerable Gains from a credulous superstitious People, who gave too much notice to her Sooth-saying, were now irritated by the losing of those Profits, and having carried the Apostle before the civil Magistrates, from Envy and Revenge they load him and *Silas* with very odious Crimes, representing them as Disturbers of the publick Peace, and seditiously opposing themselves to the Laws and Customs of the Country: Hereupon the Magistrates, contrary to the Rights and Privileges of a Citizen of *Rome*, having illegally abused *Paul* and his Companion, threw them into Prison. In the 25 Verse, we have their Employment during this Confinement, *They counted it all Joy that they were thought worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ*, and therefore publicly prayed and sang Praises unto God; they knew that the light Afflictions of this World needed not to vex and make them uneasie, while they were serving their God who was able to deliver them,

them, in whom they expressed their Confidence and Hope: And from the following *Verse* we see it was not in vain, for God by a Miracle shook off their Chains; all the Care and Precaution of the Magistrates, when they ordered them to be thrust into the inner Prison, and their Feet made fast in the Stocks, could not detain those Prisoners whom God resolved to set free. We find these holy Men did not make use of this Miracle in order to the making of their Escape, since this would both have exposed the Jaylor to Punishment, as if he had been accessory to the Prisoners getting free; and might also have obscured the Glory of the irresistible Power of God manifested upon this Occasion, since Persons in Bonds might be reputed to have been made loose of them by their own Art and Cunning, and so the divine Efficiency slip unnoticed: Besides, their continuing in Prison gave Opportunity for the Conversion of the Jaylor and his Household, and to that brave courageous Testimony given to the just civil Liberties of Mankind, and the Rights of a *Roman* oppressed by the illegal Sentence of the Magistrates, when *Paul* shewed it was not unbecoming the Meekness and Patience of an Apostle to tell them, that, they having scourged a *Roman uncondemned*, he would not cowardly betray his Privileges by going away privately, but that the Magistrates should own their Error by coming themselves and fetching him out. It was no Wonder that the Jaylor was amazed to behold all the Prisoners Bands loosed, the Doors open, and the Foundations of the Prison shaken; this was so unusual, and had so much of a Miracle in it, that we find he came in trembling and fell down before *Paul* and *Silas*: He probably imagined

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ned them Gods descended amongst Men, this being agreeable enough to the heathenish Notions.

But that we may, without any further account of this History, come directly to our Text : In the preceeding *Verse* we have a very astonishing Effect these Things had upon the Soul of the Jaylor, it made a Person, who probably had never before thought seriously upon his everlasting Concerns, had been as others deprived of the Light of the Gospel, and, being darkned in his Mind, had lived unconcerned about a State after Death, now reflect that he had other Work to do than to indulge the Pleasures and Lusts of the Body, and to provide for them ; hence he cried out, *What shall I do to be saved ?* The greatest Part of Mankind fill their Spirits with the Concerns of this Life, either the Cares and Riches of the World consume their Strength, Vigour and Thought ; or they spend their Years in more open Debauches, and take every Opportunity to divert God from their Minds : But an awakned Conscience will turn the Course of their Thoughts, and make them run in another Chancel. When the Terrors of God, the Certainty of a future State and a Judgment to come, are pressed home upon the Soul, he can no more lull himself asleep with the Vanities of Life ; for 'tis only Ignorance and Stupidity that hinder Men from the utmost Earnestness in joyning with the Jaylor in his Question, *What shall we do to be saved ?* He was now convinced that there was a God above who had Power over all, from the extraordinary Effects of a divine Arm he had beheld ; and that therefore it must be of the last Importance to all Men, in what Terms they stood

stood with this Lord who was able to save or to destroy: He had Reasons to convince him; *Paul and Silas* were the Servants of this God, that they were sent to instruct Men in the Way to be at Peace with him, and saved by him. Upon this account it was highly reasonable and very natural for him to enquire at them, *What he must do to be saved?*

I might hence observe the mighty Power of God, and the uncontrollable Influence he has upon the Souls of Men. The Jaylor had no outward Arguments, no external Motives, to put him all of a sudden upon this Question so unusual to him; for we see he had not been as yet instructed by the Apostle. He that *breathed the Spirit of Man within him, is able to subdue all Things to himself*: And when he resolves to set up his Kingdom in the Hearts of Sinners, the Depth of Ignorance and Stupidity, the most hardened Obstinacy and all the Efforts of Satan, will fall before him and shall never stop his working: But I shall not insist upon this.

In the Words now read, we have the Answer given to this momentous Question, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*: And it should be our serious Endeavour to know and comply with the excellent Advice here given, for it is of infinite Weight and Consequence to us. In it we may remark the following Things.

1. We have the noblest Pursuit and the highest Attainment Men can possibly aspire after, and the arriving to which should be their great Endeavour, *Salvation, and thou shalt be saved and thy House*. We are not only hereby to understand that the Jaylor should be put into the Way of Salvation, and have the

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the Paths thereof made known to him, but that he should actually be at length possessed of it: This comes up to the Extent of the Phrase, *thou shalt be saved*, and there is no Reason to straiten and restrict it in this Place, for the Scriptures every where proclaim that by the Faith of Jesus Christ we are justified and pardoned, and so shall *partake of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*: Besides, our Text is an Answer to the Jaylor's Question, and we have all the Grounds imaginable to perswade us, that he meant to have the Way told how he might get to the highest Bliss and Happiness; so that when the Apostle says *he should be saved*, we are to understand, that, upon his Compliance with the Directions given him, he should get a Freedom from all Evil and Sorrow, and an Overflow of all Good which should fully satisfy all his Desires, in short, that his Happiness should be as complete as his Wishes, and as lasting as his Soul.

2dly. We have the Way to attain to this glorious State, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. Where we may consider. 1. The Person who is to be the Object of our Faith, him upon whom we are to believe, *the Lord Jesus Christ*, the supreme King of the World, the great Saviour of lost Sinners, and who was the Christ, called and anointed to this Office by the Father. In the Gospel Christ is the great Substance of all divine Revelations, he is our Life, our Light, all and in all, the Author and Finisher of eternal Salvation to all who obey him. And he is, in a peculiar manner, the Object of justifying Faith, as he is the high Priest over the House of our God, who bare our Transgressions, who by once offering of himself for ever per-

perfected them that are sanctified, made an end of Sin and brought in everlasting Righteousness.

2. We have our Duty to this Saviour, what ought to be the Actings of our Souls towards him, that so we may be saved by him, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. Faith or Believing is differently used in the holy Scriptures, and is commonly divided by Divines into temporal, historical, the Faith of Miracles, and saving or justifying Faith. I shall not trouble you with discoursing upon each of these, but only notice these two Significations of the Word.

1. It is put for an Assent to the Truths of revealed Religion, when we give Credit to the Relations concerning Jesus Christ, that he was the true *Messiah* who was sent of God to save Sinners, and to make Satisfaction to divine Justice for his People's Sins, and who, in Pursuance thereof, being God-man, was born of a Woman, came and lived in our World, gave in our stead perfect and every way complete Obedience to all the Laws of God, without the least Defect, Spot or Blemish; and, having endured all the Miseries of Life, the Contradiction of Sinners against himself, gave thereby the noblest Pattern of Goodness and Patience; and at last bare the Stripes wherewith we are healed, and suffered a cruel shameful Death upon the Cross, and the third Day rose again for our Justification. I say, Persons who are persuaded in their Minds that these Things, and any others whether historical or doctrinal, are really true as they are told us in the holy Oracles, are said to believe: But though this may produce very great Changes upon the Lives of Men, and the constant abiding Impressions of it be an high
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and noble Attainment ; yet it is far from coming up to that Faith in Christ whereby we must be saved, and they are guilty of infinite Folly, who imagine that a bare giving Credit to and being convinced of the Truths in the Scriptures, will entitle them to the Character of sincere Christians. Which will be evident, if ye consider that such a believing may not always engage us to love God, and obey the Commands of the Gospel; but our wicked Hearts may neglect, hate and despise what our Judgments are perswaded of, and in that case it will be so far from saving us, that it will aggravate our Sin and make our Condemnation the heavier, for the Person who knoweth his Master's Will and doth it not, shall be beaten with double Stripes. So *Acts viii. 13.* we read that upon the Preaching of Philip, Simon Magus himself believed also, while yet Peter tells him that he was in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity. And, which puts this beyond the least Doubt, the Devils are said to *believe and tremble*; those damned Spirits are fully perswaded of the Faithfulness and Power of God, and of all that is contained in the sacred Oracles, and, in this respect, there is no such stupid Infidelity in Hell: But then this has no Influence to the bettering of their Souls, and engaging them to any Obedience to God's Law; the Views of his Perfections now increase their Hatred to him, and heightens their Torment and Despair. And I am afraid it is so with too many upon Earth, who stifle the Convictions of their Conscience, and who, *though they know God, yet glorifie him not as God.* But

2. We have Mention made in Scripture of a higher, and by far more noble Kind of Faith, which goes further than being perswaded of the Truth of what the Scriptures reveal to us: It flows from a Conviction of the Evil of Sin, of the Fittedness of Christ to all the Weaknesses and Wants of Sinners, it endears our Saviour to our Souls, and complies with the Terms of Salvation proposed to us in the Gospel, by receiving and resting upon him alone for Salvation, as it is excellently expressed in our Catechism. It is often held out to us in Scripture by *trusting in Christ, coming unto him where we may find Rest to our Souls.* It is this Faith which is not dead, but sheweth its Sincerity and Vigour by its Working and Efficacy: It is active and kindles the Soul into a heavenly Fire of divine Love; and is an abiding Principle, in a renewed Soul, of holy Obedience to God in Christ in all manner of Conversation, whereby the Heart is cleansed from the Filth and Pollution of the baser Lusts, for *whoever hath this Faith in him, endeavours to purifie himself even as God is pure.*

1. We are not said to be saved by this Faith, as if it were the Motive which determined God to reconcile us again to himself. It is impossible God could be moved by any Thing in us to have Thoughts of Peace towards any of the lost Posterity of *Adam*, because all the Good that we enjoy, every pious Inclination, and the least Degree of Faith owns him for its Author and Source; we are the *Workmanship of God, who are saved by Faith, but that not of our selves, it is the Gift of God.* The Spring and peculiar Fountain of Election, and all the glorious happy Effects of it towards Sinners,
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is the free unmerited Favour of God, his unbounded Goodness, whereby *he hath Mercy upon whom he will have Mercy.* Agreeably to this 'tis said, *Ephes. ii. 8. That by Grace we are saved;* for of our selves we are *Children of Wrath as well as others.*

2. Nor, when it is said that *if we believe in Jesus Christ we shall be saved,* are we to imagine that Faith, as a Work of ours, is the Righteousness upon the account of which we are justified: This were an utter overthrowing of the Doctrine of the Gospel, which every where declares, that if we would be happy, and be able to give an Account to God with Joy in the great Day, we must appear not clothed with our own but with the Righteousness of Jesus Christ. His perfect Obedience, and meritorious Sufferings, can only procure the Pardon of Sin and Acceptance with our Maker; for *he is of God made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, I. Cor. i. 30. And we are justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24.* Wherefore,

3. We are said to be saved by believing, as Faith is the Mean or Instrument whereby we lay hold upon the Righteousness of Jesus Christ, that *Raiment of the Saints* which is *unspotted and clean:* Hereby we come to have an Interest in his Purchase, this is what is required of us in order to our being saved by him, and upon believing we are united to our Saviour, and become Members of that Body whereof he is the Head.

From the Words thus a little explained, we may observe the following Truth, as the Foundation of what I shall discourse to you from this Text, *namely,*

ly, that believing in our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only Way proposed by our offended God, whereby we may be freed from that inconceivable Misery we are exposed to by having him for our Enemy, be blessed in the Pardon of Sin and Sanctification of our Natures, and at length be made happy beyond our Thought or Desire in Heaven: And that upon our believing in Christ, we have the most secure and undeceiving Grounds for a solid Hope that we shall be made Partakers of this Salvation.

In discoursing to you from these Words, I shall endeavour to do the following Things.

1. I shall propose *two* or *three* Considerations, to evince the great Weight and Importance of the Doctrine concerning believing in Jesus Christ, and the absolute Necessity there is for all Christians to understand it in some Measure, that I may engage all of us, with Diligence and Dependence upon God, to apply our selves to the acquiring the Knowledge of it, and getting our Souls established and unmoved in this momentous Doctrine.

2dly. I shall endeavour to give you the Scripture Account of believing in Christ, that so we may discover somewhat of its Nature, and not build upon a false Bottom in an Affair which so much concerns us.

3dly. I shall shew the Excellency of this noble Grace, from its exact Fittedness to all the Designs of God in it, and its Suitableness to illustrate the divine Perfections, the Wisdom, Goodness and Holiness of God, which so brightly shine in the Recovery of fallen Man by Christ Jesus: And endeavour to lay before you the Folly of the Cavils some make against it, as if Justification by Faith

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obscured the divine Purity, and tended to Licentiousness and a lessening the Obligations to Holiness, by proving that this Faith we are speaking of, must be a Principle of sincere persevering Obedience to all the Laws of God, and that no Person can have any Title to this believing in Christ, except it teach him to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.

4thly. I shall apply my self to prove the Truth of the Doctrine from several Considerations, and that in both its Parts, *namely*, 1. That 'tis only by believing in Christ that we can be saved. 2. That upon our coming unto him, and receiving him as he is proposed to us in the Gospel, we have the best and surest Grounds for Peace of Conscience, in the Prospect of attaining to *the End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls*, and that our Hope and Confidence herein is built upon a Rock firm and stable, which will bear the Attacks of the most violent Wind and Rain, without falling or being shaken.

5thly. I shall draw a few of the many practical Inferences which this large and excellent Subject affords, and explain a little the Influence the Consideration of it ought to have in all the Parts and Business of Life.

As to the *First* of these, I thought it necessary that we should see it is not a curious Enquiry or an Attainment of Learning, which we might safely enough and without any great Hazard be ignorant of; but on the contrary, that all Conditions of Men should labour with all their Might to be well instructed in it, and to know the Scripture Reasons whereupon they bottom their Pra-

Practice in this Matter : Which I hope will be evident if we consider,

1. That the highest Benefits and the most enlarged Happiness are to be gained by it. Were there but small Advantages to be procured by believing in Christ, it might excuse our not meditating upon it ; if we might employ our Thoughts in more useful Enquiries, our Folly would be the less in letting this slip unnoticed ; or if it were the Interest of some other Creatures, and did not immediately concern our selves, it would not be so necessary to press home the Consideration hereof upon our Souls : But we see from the Text itself that we are saved by it. Miserable unthinking Sinners ! who *spend their Years in Vanity*, and their Days to as little Purpose or abiding Fruit as *a Tale that is told*, and mind so little what concerns them most : How has the God of this World blinded fallen Man, as to divert his Thoughts from this excellent Subject ? It is a certain Rule, and so plain, that it is level to every one of our Capacities, that a wise Man will give the most Time, Care and Application to the Thing whence he will receive the highest Advantage : Now, I am sure, if we follow this Direction, the admirable Usefulness and indispensable Necessity of your being informed aright concerning believing in Christ will be past Dispute ; for by it alone we have an Interest in all the glorious Effects of the Son of God's coming into the World, and tabernacling amongst Men ; and, I am sure, it ought to be a powerful Motive, to all who know any Thing of their Maker, and what incomprehensible Bliss there is in being united to him, and having him for their God, to the Study of believing, that they

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may know what it is without wandering in so momentous a Case. There are some Parts of Knowledge which may well enough be wanted by ordinary People; if they diligently follow their own Callings, they may glorifie God without them: But the Knowledge of this Doctrine is equally and absolutely necessary to all Ranks of Men, from the King upon his Throne to the meanest of the People; for all of them stand in need of Pardon of Sin, Peace with God, and Justification by the Blood of Jesus, *in whom we have Boldness and Access with Confidence by the Faith of him*, Eph. iii. 12.

Further it is not only necessary for a Christian, but it runs through all his Performances, every Part of his Life has Vigour and Efficacy from it, and we cannot perform the least Duty acceptably to God if we mix not Faith therewith: The Apostle tells us, that *the Life he lived in the World was by the Faith of the Son of God, and that the Just shall live by Faith*.

So that you see, if all the Blessings that the great God designs to bestow upon Sinners, in sending them his dearest Gift, *the Son of his Love*; if Freedom from the Extreme of Misery, our having God for our Enemy, and if the certain Enjoyment of a Happiness in Heaven, as large as our Desires and Souls, when *God himself will wipe away all Tears from our Eyes*; I say, if these be worth minding, then the Knowledge and Practice of believing in Christ should be the Subject of our serious Thoughts and Meditation.

2d'y. We should endeavour to be fixed and right bottomed in the Doctrine of believing in Christ, and not make it a By-work, and pass it over with a slight careless Examination; because there

there is great Difficulty to get a right Understanding thereof, and it is extremely hard to get our Souls to bow to what is so contrary to the natural Opinions and Inclinations of Men: The Apostle tells us that *the natural Man knoweth not the Things of God, neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The vain Reasonings and foolish Imaginations of Men, whose Minds, even of the best, are in some Measure blinded by the Fall, and kept in Darkness by Prejudices, Lusts and Passions, go contrary to the Doctrine of Faith: They cannot fathom the Goodness, Holiness, and Wisdom of God, in making us abandon our own Works; in obliging us to labour with all our Might after Holiness, and yet, when we appear before God, to *account it all but Loss and Dung*, that we may be justified by Faith alone in an unseen Christ. These Things, I say, are so uncouth and odd to a Mind not enlightened by the divine Spirit, that Christ crucified and Faith in him, are a Stumbling-block or Foolishness to the greatest Part: Now, this shews us the Necessity of the greatest Care and Diligence in getting a firm Perswasion of this Truth, which appears further to be our Duty, if we consider,

3dly. How ready our Souls, though once perswaded and enlightened, are to go back and lose the clear Views of this Doctrine; and the great and fatal Abuses that have been made of it to the Ruin of many Souls. Our Lusts and vicious Inclinations, the Blindness of our wicked Hearts, the Cunning and Fraud of so powerful an Adversary as the Devil is, made the more dangerous by his constant unwearied Application to ruine us, are all Arguments to move us to Diligence in this Study,

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that we may not be shaken and unfixed by so many and so strong Enemies. Besides, we are ready to debase the Doctrine of the Grace of God, and Salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, to the worst Ends and vilest Purposes: How often is it turned to Licentiousness, and made a Patron of Sin, as if the Mercy of God might excuse or protect us in an ungodly Course? And how many deceive their own Souls by taking up with false Notions of this important Article, and fancy that their calling Christ *Lord, Lord*, and pretending to come to him as their Saviour, will bring them to Heaven, though they have no care to do the Will of his Father who is there?

4thly. We may come to get our selves rooted and grounded in the Faith, so as not to be easily shaken and driven away by every Wind of Temptation; blessed be God we all have the Bible in our Hands, which is *able to make us wise unto Salvation*, this is a Light which shineth so as to be a *Lamp to our Paths*, hereby Life and Immortality, Christ and Salvation through Faith in him are made manifest. And this should be a mighty Encouragement to us in our searching after divine Truths, that we have such an excellent Treasure, not, as in the dark Times of Popery, hid in an unknown Tongue from the common People, and wrested by their Priests to defend the most abominable Heresies; but open to every one of us, so that we may in it read and understand the great Essentials of Religion, and Concerns of our Soul. I thought it might not be unfit to lay these Things before you, that you might be convinced that it is not indifferent whether ye understand what it is to believe in Christ; but that, since 'tis the only Mean whereby

whereby we can be saved and happy in another World, since 'tis hard to be thoroughly informed of its Nature, and the most fatal Consequences follow a mistaking and abusing of it, we might seriously endeavour to grow in the Knowledge of this great Design and Precept of Christianity; for as it is *John xx. 31. These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his Name.* I come now to the *Second* Thing proposed to be spoken to from the Doctrine, *namely*, to give you the Scripture Account of believing in Christ, that so we may discover somewhat of its Nature, and not build upon a false Bottom in a Thing which so much concerns us.

I shall not trouble you with any accurate Definition of believing in Christ: The greatest Men, who have endeavoured to perform this, have come short and are wanting in some Degree or other, so great is the Mysteriousness of this Doctrine, and so weak our Understandings. I purpose to give you some View of it, by shewing both what is required in all Persons before they can be capable of this Faith, and by laying open some of these Actings of our Souls which are in a more peculiar Manner included in believing in Christ.

I need scarce tell you in general that Knowledge is absolutely necessary to it, however the Papists would fain perswade us that Ignorance is a Foundation of Faith: I own it is so of theirs which hateth the Light because it is so absurd and impious; but our Scriptures teach us the contrary, for there is no Duty more pressed upon us in them to grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of God our Saviour, and Ignorance of him is always a Character of one that has no Part or Portion in his Favour and Pur-

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chase. It is blasphemous to imagine that God can be pleased with ignorant Worshippers and a blind Faith, since he himself *dwells in Light* : And 'tis being unacquainted with him, that is the Cause any are to be found who don't love and serve him above all as the best and greatest Being. So that I need not insist upon so plain a Case as this is, that in order to true Faith Knowledge of God is necessary : But it will not be unfit to take a more particular View of some of those Perfections of God which are in a more special way interested in the Redemption of Mankind ; for this will very much help us in framing a right Notion of believing, and 'tis low mean Thoughts of those Excellencies, which are the great Source and Occasion of the many Debates and Mistakes that are to be found so frequently concerning Faith.

1. In order to believing in Christ, we must be perswaded of the infinite Goodness of God, and the unbounded Freedom of his unsearchable Mercy ; That *he is long-suffering and patient, ready to pardon Transgression and Sin*. This is a noble and endearing Attribute of God's, to which we owe our All, and which is the Source of all the Good and Happiness any Creatures enjoy, to which we are to ascribe one Moment's Deliverance from everlasting Darkness, for 'tis because in him Compassions flow that we are not consumed. This Grace of God shines so illustrious and bright every where, that he must be altogether without Thought, or stupidly forgetful of God's Benefits, who makes any Doubt that Goodness belongs to him, that he is willing all should be saved, and that it is not of him that the Sinner dies, but that his Ruin and

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Misery are intirely owing to his own Folly ; for God's Goodness is over all his Works.

Now a reasonable abiding Perswasion of this Attribute of God's, is absolutely necessary to true Faith ; for how can we cast all the Concerns of our Souls upon him whose Compassions we doubt ? How will we forgo, not only our own Righteousness, but all the Pleasures and Allurements of this Life, and consecrate our selves to the Service of Christ, except we be convinced that our God is so infinitely good, *that he will never bid the House of Jacob serve him in vain ?* Besides, we are Sinners who have rebelled against God, and thereby exposed our selves to the Power of his Justice ; he has not only a Title to shew forth in us the Vengeance of eternal Fire, but the Dignity of his Government, and the Authority of his Laws seem some way to require this : And in such a Case a Perswasion of the infinite Mercy of God, even to the greatest and most abandoned Sinners, is necessary to the first Beginnings and the least Motions of believing ; Sinners can have no Hopes in their offended Maker, no Expectation of Pardon, no Peace and Rest in Christ, except they have the firm Impressions upon their Minds that *in him Compassions flow* : Hence it is laid down as the very first Principle of Faith, *Heb. xi. vi. He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

But I need not say more upon this Head, for I am afraid too many presume upon the divine Goodness, and, *because Justice is not executed speedily, they go on to do Evil.* This is the Perfection of God we are readiest to entertain and embrace with the least Backwardness, because we oft abuse it to
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make us easy in our Sins, and to encourage us to go on in an ungodly Course, in hopes of Pardon : But this false Notion of the divine Mercy, as I shall afterwards have occasion to shew, is directly contrary to the Nature of true believing in Christ.

2dly. We must know and be perswaded of the inviolable Faithfulness of God, that his Word is more stable than the Heavens or Earth, and that, though this vast Fabrick shall pass away, yet his Testimonies can never fail, that *faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it*, I. Thess. v. 24. thus we must be sure that all his Promises shall be accomplished, that God never breaks his Covenant or catches any with Guile.

1. Now, this is the Beginning of all Religion, for how can Pardon of Sin, and the Blessedness included in having our Transgressions covered, or Heaven it self, afford us any Comfort or at all move us, if we doubt of God's Faithfulness, or be not assured that upon Compliance with the Call of the Gospel we shall be possessed of them ? And this Conviction is in a special Manner necessary to Faith, will we rely upon a Saviour, *take his Yoke and Burden upon us*, can we throw our Souls wholly upon God in Christ, except we know that *our Faith shall not be in vain* ? We are in the Body, Captives to sensible Pleasures, an evil World surrounds us with its Allurements and the Fears of its Crosses : Now, if we be not perswaded of God's Faithfulness, we will never be able to believe in Christ, and bear up against these Temptations ; but will go down with the Stream, and take up with what we have in Hand, present Enjoyments. How, without this can we count it a *faithful Saying and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sin-*

Sinners? Hence the Apostle useth it as a powerful Argument, *Heb. x. 23. to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised,* and *Chap. xi. and 11. speaking of Sarah's Faith, through Faith also Sarah her self received Strength to conceive Seed, and was delivered of a Child when she was past Age, because she judged him faithful who had promised, and 'tis said Ver. 13. these all died in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were perswaded of them.* If then ye would arrive at the Performance of this excellent and necessary Duty, *believing in Christ that ye may be saved by him,* labour to get your Souls fully sensible that God cannot lie nor repent, that he never failed or forsook any who put their Trust in him, that so ye may be prepared to rely upon his Promises, and depend for your eternal Happiness upon them. But I proceed to another Attribute of God's, the Knowledge and Perswasion of which is presupposed to *believing in Christ* in a saving Manner.

3dly. We must have the most submissive and reverential Thoughts of the divine Wisdom, that *Wisdom and Might are his, that he hath Counsel and Understanding, and with him is no Darknes at all, for his Understanding is infinite.* The Wisdom of God consists in the most exact and perfect ordering of all Means, so as they may best conduce to attain his Ends. Men see but in Part, and know but in Part, they oft pursue mistaken Measures which hinder instead of promoting their Ends; their Folly, their passions, and Prejudices often mar their own Cause, and they ruine themselves, when their Enemies could not without their own Assistance have injured them. Now this is infinitely removed from God, every Thing is seen and searched into the Bottom by his pierce-

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piercing Eye, for *Darkness is as Light before him*. There are no Powers in the Creation but what depend upon him, and are derived from him, so that he must exactly discern how all Causes, every Circumstance, Instrument, and Mean may best work his Purposes. The Wisdom of God appears not only in the regular and harmonious Frame of Heaven and Earth, which justly fills us with Wonder : But principally in his governing all Creatures, and his managing towards rational Beings, so as the Glory of his Holiness, Power, Goodness, and Justice may all be manifested, and that every Thing he does may be perfectly consistent with all these Attributes.

Now the Reason why I make particular Mention of this, as specially necessary to be known, and deep Impressions to be made of it upon our Spirits before we can believe in Christ, is this, the Scheme of Christianity is so mysterious, so far above the Reach of Men, that we are naturally inclined to despise and neglect it, as unworthy of God and contrary to the Wisdom of so perfect an Understanding. The *Jews* who had turned mad with the Dream of temporal Greatness, and the Fancy that their *Messiah* should conquer the World for their Nation, were mightily stumbled at a Redeemer, who did not appear with the external Magnificence and Glory of the Son of God, but passed for the Son of a Carpenter : Hence we find them in a Surprise, very natural to our dark Understandings, *Matth. xiii. 54, &c. They said, Whence hath this Man this Wisdom and these mighty Works ? Is not this the Carpenter's Son ? Is not his Mother called Mary ? and his Brethren James and Joses, and Simon and Judas ? and his Sisters are they not all with us ? Whence then hath this Man all these Things ?*

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It is added, which I principally take Notice of, *and they were offended in him.* The Notions that Men had of God's Wisdom, which were entertained by the Learned of that Age, and which all who want a renewed Understanding still incline to, were, that when his Son should come into the World, he would be attended by glorious Angels, and with the State of a mighty Monarch; that he would conquer all his Enemies, and subduing them before him, immediately execute his Designs of reforming Men, and destroying impenitent Sinners: But on the other hand, and I would have all of us asking at our own Hearts as we go along, if we do not too much fall in with them, they esteemed Christianity a foolish ignorant Scheme, that the Lord of all should become Man, appear in the World with nothing of outward Majesty, become poor and exposed, and though he was able to deliver himself, yet he died upon the Cross. It seemed an uncouth and ill contrived Way our Saviour took to convert many Disciples, to propose nothing to them but Afflictions and a forsaking of all the good Things of this Life, the *taking up of their Cross and following him*, seemed to be a harsh unwise Method to gain many Followers: And there is no Truth that the Apostle Paul inculcates with more Fervour than this, I. Cor. i. 17. *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel; not with Wisdom of Words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none Effect: For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish Foolishness.*

Now before you can believe in Christ with a saving Faith, you must throw off these Notions; and in order to your receiving a Christ crucified for your All, trusting alone to his Satisfaction without
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any Works of your own, and embracing all the Parts of the Doctrine of the Gospel, it is absolutely necessary ye should have deep Impressions of the infinite Wisdom and Understanding of God. Get your Minds perswaded, that though ye see not the End of Things, and may imagine such a Way would have done better, and would have been a wiser Mean to gain God's End, and a worthier Method of Salvation: Yet it is because we are but blind and ignorant, and do not perceive the Excellency of all God's Doings. If ye are firmly perswaded, that though his *Ways be in the Deep, and Clouds and Darkneſs may ſurround his Throne,* yet *Justice and true Judgment are always the Habitation of it*; this will ſilence Doubts and Arguments as to the moſt myſterious Parts of the Gospel: And though ye don't underſtand every Piece of his Management, yet 'tis being God's Will to reconcile you to the Belief of its perfect Wiſdom; this will prepare you for believing in Chriſt, *he crucified,* though to the Jews a *Stumbling-block* and to the Greeks *Fooliſhneſs*, will be to you *Chriſt the Power of God, and the Wiſdom of God*: Your Souls will be raviſhed with the perfect Harmony amongſt all his Attributes, and the exact Fittedneſs of all his Methods and Ways. And I am perswaded that one great Cause of all the *Arminian* and *Socinian* Errors, and the Remains of them in the Hearts of the beſt, concerning Juſtification by Faith only, flow from wrong Notions, or faint wavering Impressions of God's incomprehenſible Wiſdom: This hinders us from bowing our Underſtandings to God's, and ſtirſ us to the framing a Righteouſneſs of our own which we think wiſer and better. So I hope, you ſee how neceſſary in order to believing

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believing in Christ, a fixed and deep Sense of God's Wisdom is.

4thly. In order to *believing in Jesus Christ that we may be saved*, there is nothing more necessary than the Knowledge of God's Holiness and unspotted Purity, that *just and right is he*: Both because it is the Honour and Dignity of that Attribute, which is chiefly consulted in Christ's Sufferings and Salvation by Faith in him; and that from mistaken Notions of this flows the eternal Ruin of many Souls, who take up with a Religion that will never bear them out before God, however it may humour their own Folly; and we, lying dead in Sin, and captivated by Lusts, are very ready to debase God's Holiness to our Practices.

The Holiness of God consists in the complete Rectitude of his Nature without the least declining from it, he must act always according to the exactest Rules of Right: And the Perfection of this consists in its being infinite beyond all Bounds, higher than the Heavens. The noblest Angels before the Throne, tho' free from the least Sin and filled with the Love of God, are yet but finite, their Love to Truth and Goodness, and other Parts of Purity are infinitely below God's; hence it is said, that *the Heavens are not pure in his Sight, and he charges his Angels with Folly*: But he is a God of Truth, and without Iniquity, *just and right is he*, the least Sin is abhorred by him with an infinite Hatred, *Fools cannot stand in his Sight, for he hateth all the Workers of Iniquity*, he cannot endure the least Remains of Disobedience, nor admit of a Compensation for a Continuance in any Sin, for it is the great Law he gives to all rational Creatures, that *they should be holy even as he is holy, and purifie themselves*

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themselves as their Father in Heaven is pure. You must then endeavour to raise your Souls to some Apprehensions of this exalted Holiness of our God, at the Views of which even perfect Spirits cover their Faces with their Wings, crying, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty.* Believe that this is essential to God, that he is unchangeable in this Perfection, and will upon no Consideration ever act in the least unworthy of it. And avoid imitating a great many, who flatter themselves in some small venial Sins, as they fancy them from abused Thoughts of the divine Goodness, and Want of that Aw of his perfect Holiness which should be always impressed upon our Souls: They go on in Iniquity, and believe that God's Mercy will not suffer him to notice small Escapes which have so little Harm in them.

Now the great Necessity of a thorough Knowledge and Conviction of the divine Holiness, in order to believing in Christ, is beyond Doubt. This Attribute in a special Manner runs through the whole of Christ's mediatorial Work, and has a powerful Influence upon all the Parts of true Faith. God manifests, in the brightest Manner, the Inviolableness of his Sanctity and his unchangeable Purity in the Obedience and Sufferings of Christ: And we will never comply with the Gospel's Design and Doctrine, till we have put off all our narrow low Opinions of God's Holiness.

I shall not insist now upon the Sufferings of Christ, because I may have afterwards Occasion to illustrate the Holiness of God as to them; but as to our Redeemer's Obedience, which he paid without any Defect to all the Law of God, it is our Righteousness, *he is made of God unto us*
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and thou shalt be saved.

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Wisdom and Righteousness : This is the Strain of the Scriptures of Truth, that by it we must be justified before God, that this is the *white Raiment* without which we shall be cast into outer Darkness. Now one noble Act of Faith is to embrace Christ for our Righteousness, to go out of our selves, and build all our Hope of Heaven and Happiness upon this Bottom, and that we should not depend upon our most perfect Works, even after Conversion, but, casting them away in the Business of Justification, with our whole Souls admire the Doctrine of the Gospel, embrace and receive it, trust and rely upon Christ alone. Our having awful Thoughts of God's Holiness will lead us to such a Management, and the Want of it will effectually hinder us from coming to Christ; for our main Motive to do so is, that it is unworthy of God to accept of any Obedience that is not perfect; that therefore we must *obey the whole Law in all Things to do them*, else we cannot stand in Judgment before him: Now such Thoughts drive us from leaning to our selves, and make us cheerfully and with full Resolution of Soul lean upon Christ's Righteousness.

I believe there is no Error more generally prevails in the World, and in some Degree even amongst good Men, than a secret Fancy, that, because God is good, and in him Compassions flow, if they obey him in the Main of their Lives, and be not guilty of open or aggravated Crimes, they need no more: And the great Temptation to this seems to be, that we find it our Duty, and fit for Men, especially civil Governors upon Earth, to be content with such an Obedience, and not to be too rigid and severe in exacting more; and so

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we imagine 'tis an unworthy Notion of God, to think he is not as good and more merciful than we are. But I would fain ask such, if they believe the vilest Criminal, and most flagitious obstinate Sinner, so far unbecoming the best of our Performances, and the Purity of Soul of the farthest advanced in Virtue, as the least Transgression is below and contrary to God's Holiness? No, it is infinite; for *with him is no Iniquity at all*: Which will shew us the Necessity of a Saviour, and engage us the easier to embrace him.

5thly. The last Thing I shall mention upon this Head, is the Justice of God, whereby he preserves the Authority of his Government over rational Agents, against the Insults and Contempt put upon it by the Disobedience of any subjected to it; and this has a very near Connection with his Holiness. Now before we can come to Christ, we must be perswaded, that *God is a jealous God, who cannot acquit the guilty, but that to the full he will pour Wrath, Anguish and Tribulation upon every Soul that doth Evil, that he is a consuming Fire to all the Workers of Iniquity. O! how terrible is it to fall into the Hands of a living God, when he is our Enemy, who will make us miserable beyond our Thought, when he crushes the Damned by his almighty Arm? And how little do Sinners mind this? but they play upon the Hole of an Asp, and sport themselves with Sin which will consume them for ever; they never alter their Course, nor come to a Saviour for Pardon, because they see no Danger in Disobedience, but flatter themselves that they'll get free: But, when we believe in Christ, we must conceive God as terrible in his Holiness, as one armed with Fury and irresistible Power against every Sinner,*
and

and who will see the least *lots* of the Threatning added to the Law fulfilled, and who, as the Apostle tells us, *without Blood will give no Remission*; hence we flee to Christ for Refuge, we lay hold of his Sufferings which were of infinite Value, and fully satisfied all the Demands of God's Justice. Now I think, I need say no more, but mention this, to convince you, that you must have very firm Impressions of God's Justice upon your Souls, in order to your complying with the Apostle's Advice in our Text, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* We find the true Motive which works in all who in their Principle deny the Satisfaction of Christ, or who in Practice do not flee to it, *Psal. l. 21, 22.* (and we may apply to the least secret Sin) *These Things hast thou done, and I kept Silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thy self; but I will reprove thee, and set them in Order before thine Eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

I shall conclude this Head with only putting you in Mind, that it is not a faint passing View of these Things that is necessary to complying with Christ, and is supposed in true Believers, but a thorough deep Conviction of them which is strong and lasting.

But in the *second Place*, he that believes must know and be convinced of several Things in his own State, and the Condition Men are in by Nature, and be suitably wrought upon by them. We must reflect on the Depth of Sin, and the Wrath we have plunged our selves into by our departing from God; and that therefore we are *without God and Hope in the World*, that, being *Transgressors from*

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the Womb and delighting in Folly, we are the Persons who are liable to the Threatning, and who, though God in his great Goodness has yet delayed the full Execution of the Sentence, yet are under the Curse of the Law, because *we have not observed all the Words of it to do them.* Now, though this seems but a light Thing, and every Man will readily own that he is a Sinner; yet it is very difficult, and very rare for a Person, with Deliberation and Design, to think upon his Ways to any good Purpose: The Thoughts of Sin are uneasy and disturbing to Men who love it, they are but unwelcome Guests to such Souls, and thence they drive away any Convictions, and continue in their old Course, and stifle the conscious Views of their own State, as a Child of Wrath, by a new Flood of continued Transgression. To give you some little View of what I design by this Conviction of our Condition as Sinners, and the native Effects of it, I shall in a few Words explain what Divines ordinarily call the *Law-work* upon Souls: But, before I enter upon this, I would take notice that I do not intend to confine God's Methods in converting of Sinners, he can more softly and smoothly allure a Person to his Saviour, while the Terrors of the Lord drive others unto him; and I am far from asserting, that such particular Degrees of Sorrow and Conviction are to be found with all true Christians. I thought doing so ever favoured of too much Vanity, and Conceitedness of our own Opinions; all I mean is that the following Things, upon the matter and in some measure or other, or what is plainly equivalent to them, are necessary to believing in Christ. And,

1. A Conviction of Sin, not only that the Person himself is guilty of innumerable Transgressions of the holy Law of God, but that Sin is in its own Nature the greatest Evil and the deepest Debasement of the Soul : He is sensible that departing from God is the Extreme of Folly, that *he that sinneth against God wrongeth his own Soul*, and that *all they that hate him love Death*. This Conviction, as to its sensible Effects, is different in true Believers : But it is evident that all of them must look upon Sin as the Disgrace and Ruin of the Soul, they no more roll it under their Tongue as a sweet morsel, but are perswaded that it is *Bitterness and Death in the Belly* ; for how is it possible they can come to Christ as a Saviour, if they be not sensible of the Want of him ? *The whole need not a Physician but the sick.*

2dly. From the Knowledge of some of these Attributes of God I have already mentioned, and this Conviction of Sin, there flows a Fear of Wrath due to them for their Disobedience : And though greater Dread and Horror may be the Portion of some more than others, for God may keep one long under the Pressure of the Curse of the Law, while he brings another all of a sudden into an Overflow of Joy and Peace in the Lord ; yet, I am sure, none can be any ways sensible of the infinite Power of God, and the dreadful State of Enmity to him who is over all, and whose Hand none can stop, and at the same Time consider that they themselves are liable to the Lashes of his Fury, without being frightened at the Thoughts thereof, and be in some Measure in Job's Condition, *Job xxxi. 23. For Destruction from God was a Terror to me, and by reason of his Highness I could not endure, and Chap.*

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vi. *Ver. 4. For the Arrows of the Almighty are within me, the Poison whereof drinketh up my Spirit: The Terrors of God do set themselves in Array against me: And you see this State is but rational for such, immediately after they know themselves Children of Wrath, and exposed to the Fury of a God. So that these who dread the Want of the Pleasures of this World, or the suffering its Crosses, more than Sin and the Curse of the Law, are not capable to live a Life of Faith upon the Son of God, and believe in him.*

3dly. From a true Conviction of Sin that tends to any valuable Purposes, there follows a Sorrow for Sin, which is a great Ingredient in Repentance unto Life, and a Shame and Confusion of Face because of it. Such as consider Sin as the greatest Disgrace of the Soul, blush at it as a vile dishonourable Action: A proud Pharisee, who had small Thoughts of God's Holiness, its enlarged Extent, and infinite Perfection, trusted to his own Righteousness, and with Impudence and Presumption magnified his Merit; but a Publican who knew the debased Nature of Sin, stood afar off and hid his Face. This we see, was the Practice of Adam: He was ashamed, hid himself in the Garden, and blushed to appear before God. A Conviction of our Maker's Holiness, and of our own Transgressions, make all true Believers in some Degree like Ezra, Ezra ix. 6. *O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my Face to thee, my God; for our Iniquities are increased over our Heads, and our Trespas is grown up to the Heavens. Want of Shame upon sinning is a Proof of an obstinate Transgressor ready for Destruction, and utterly void of true Faith: Jer. vi. 15; Were they ashamed when they had committed Abo-*

Abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall amongst them that fall.

4thly. From all these, there necessarily flows an earnest vigorous Desire to get free from this miserable State, which they look upon as their greatest Evil, and is far more frightful and terrible to them than all the other Afflictions they can possibly be under. This is a native Consequence, if we have Views of God in the awful Majesty of his Holiness and the Severity of his Justice, and be conscious that we are liable to that Death which is threatened to the Transgressors of the Law, and at the same Time do not look upon our State as desperate, but that *with God there is Forgiveness that he may be feared*, that he is not an irreconcilable Enemy, but may recover our Feet from the miry Clay and draw us out of the terrible Pit; we apply our Thoughts to the searching out of the Methods whereby we may flee from the Wrath that is to come: For a convinced Conscience is very solicitous and concerned how it may escape the Wrath of God, which presents it self to him in its most terrible Shapes, so as not to be stifled by the Impressions of sensible Pleasures and the Cares of this World. It is true the greatest Part of Mankind are stupidly unconcerned as to their future State, and live without any Dread of God's Anger; and thus they indulge themselves in their Folly, without any strong Desires after Freedom from what they have no Sense of upon their Spirits; they flatter themselves with Peace though they add Drunkenness to Thirst, and do not shun the Guilt of Sin and the Curse of the Law as any ways terrible to them: But this proceeds from Ignorance and Stupidity;

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did they know how terrible a Thing it were to fall in the Hands of the living God, and how incomprehensibly miserable the Creature must be who is a Vessel of Wrath fitted for Destruction, whose Heart God will pierce with the Arrows of his Fury, they would be roused up and look about them what way they might escape. This we see was the Practice of the Jaylor in our Text, he had lived a long Time as unconcerned about the State of his Soul, as little troubled with the Thoughts of Sin as others of the heathen World: But when God wrought upon his Soul, and Furies lashed his Conscience, he did not stand to resolve whether he would abandon Iniquity, which was so filled with Charms and Beauties to him but a little before, and to debate whether he would comply with the Terms of Salvation; but cries out immediately, *what shall I do to be saved?* He wanted only to know the Way to persuade him to engage in it. Now the absolute Necessity of what I have been discoursing of, before we can believe in Christ, is evident: Because till a Man be so affected he will not see any strong Arguments to draw him to a Saviour, he'll continue in his old Course.

But farther, a Person may have all this and never be a true Convert, he may mistake the Methods appointed by God, and pursue wrong ones, like the Person, *Mic. 6. 6.* who was very desirous to know the Path of Life, *wherewith he should come before the Lord, and bow himself before the high God:* But the poor Man fancied that *Burnt-offerings, Rivers of Oyl, or the Fruit of his Body,* were a Compensation for the Sin of his Soul. And thus the Jews had a Zeal for God *Rom. x. 3.* but being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Right-

Righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the Righteousness of God.

Wherefore a convinced Sinner must be instructed in and perswaded of the true Way to Life, *Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* He must know the Doctrine of the Gospel, that in the Fulness of Time God sent his Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law; the promised *Messiah* of old, who, tho' he was the infinite God equal with the Father, yet, took upon him the Form of a Servant, became of no Reputation, and humbling himself became obedient even to the Death of the Cross; that he came to do his Father's Will, and to be the Surety and Representative of lost Sinners, which he perfectly fulfilled without any Stain or Defect; and that he completely finished Transgression, made an End of Sin, and brought in everlasting Righteousness; and that having died for our Sins, he rose again for our Justification, and by his Resurrection from the Dead was declared the Son of God with Power; that he was a perfect high Priest who had answered all the Demands of the Law, since Death the Curse of it could no longer detain him under its Empire, and is able to save to the uttermost all that shall embrace him for their Redeemer; and that he continues ever an exalted Prince and Saviour to give Repentance to Israel and the Remission of Sins. And these Things he must be perswaded of by indisputed Evidence as certain Truths; a dubious wavering Opinion, a thinking what the Gospel says probable, can never engage a Man to abandon Sin, and trust his Salvation with that Fulness of Purpose and that intire Reliance that are required to true Faith.

I might consider their Knowledge of Christ with respect to his several Offices: But because of your
Time,

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Time, I shall only enlarge a little upon his priestly Office, because that is the peculiar Object of justifying Faith.

It is the principal Doctrine of the Gospel, that *Christ is a Priest upon his Throne, God hath sworn and will not repent, that he is a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedek.* Now before a Man can be saved and brought to Heaven, there are *two Things* necessary. 1. A Pardon of all his Iniquities, whereby God, the supreme Judge and sovereign Lord of all his Creatures, declares the Person freed from the Guilt of his Transgressions, and a Liableness to the condemning Sentence of the Law, whereby he is not bound any more to Punishment and the Curse. Now this frees him from Hell, but it gives him no Title to Heaven: A Person who has not transgressed the Law, deserves no Wrath; but he has as little Claim to the Reward, till he have actually obeyed it. Wherefore, 2^{dly}. Every Person who pretends to heavenly Glory, must have a Righteousness wherewith he appears before God, and upon which he bottoms his Title. It is not enough that he be not polluted, but he must be clothed with *the wedding Garment*. So in Christ's priestly Office, we may consider these *two Things*, 1. His Sufferings, whereby he completely satisfied for the Threatning against the Disobedient. 2^{dly}. His perfect Obedience to the whole Law of God, whereby he brought in an everlasting and meritorious Righteousness: And by both these he purchased eternal Redemption for all who obey him.

It is an eternal Truth, that *the Foolish cannot stand in God's Sight*, and the Apostle Paul lays it down as a settled Principle, that *without shedding of Blood*

Blood there is no Remission, Heb. ix. 22. God's Threatnings are not to be played with, as if they were designed only to fright Children, they will all be fulfilled: Where, without this, would the Honour of his Holiness, and the Dignity of his Government shine? If Sin went unpunished, it would be an exposing his Laws to Contempt, and an Encouragement to Sinners to disobey them: But all these are evited; for God will be avenged of every Worker of Iniquity. Now, Man was utterly unable to satisfy the Law, because the Threatning was eternal Death; and you easily see, that the Person could never be delivered by his own Sufferings, when these Sufferings were by the Threatning never to have an End: Wherefore,

1. A Person who believes in Christ, must be perswaded that our Saviour by the *once offering of himself*, paid our Debt. His Person was infinite, which made what he endured of more Value than our eternal Misery would have been; and consequently, though he was but for a little while *made subject to Death*, yet the Perfection of the divine Holiness, the Inviolableness of his Purity, the awful Majesty of his Government, and his dreadful Hatred to Iniquity, and Severity against the Workers of it, never did, nor will to Eternity, shine so gloriously, and with so clear a Light, as they did when the Son of God *bore our Transgressions*, and *the Chastisement of our Peace was laid upon him*.

But, 2^{dly}. A Person who would believe in order to Salvation, must be convinced that God will never bestow Heaven without a perfect Righteousness; and that he will never accept of Obedience to that Purpose where there is the least Mixture of Sin; and, knowing that *all our Righteousnesses*
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are but as filthy Rags, he puts no Trust in them, but sees that in Christ's Obedience there is no Blemish; but that God, when he weighs it, will never find it wanting. Hence he believes that this is the only Raiment of the Saints, white and clean, wherewith he can be clothed before God so as not to be ashamed: That he alone is all their Salvation, made of God unto Sinners, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.

Thus I have given you at large some Account of what is required of Persons before they can come to Christ, and believe in him, *namely*, that they must give such a firm Assent, as I mentioned, to what has been said concerning the infinite Goodness, untainted Faithfulness, unerring Wisdom, unspotted Holiness, and awful Justice of God; and that they must have Knowledge of their own State as Sinners, a Conviction of its great Vileness and abominable Nature, a Shame and Sorrow because of it, and an earnest Desire to get free of its Guilt and Filth: And all this attended with the Persuasion that *Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

Some Divines make the whole of true Faith to consist in this Assent of our Judgment and Understanding, in our giving Credit to these Truths of the Gospel: But in doing so they debase this Doctrine, and contradict very evident Testimonies of Scripture. Many have this way believed the Gospel, whose Hearts nevertheless remained corrupt and filled with Sin, who continued Slaves to their Lusts, and glewed to their wicked Ways: We find *John ii. 23, 24. That many believed in the Name of Christ when they saw the Miracles which he did, but Jesus did not commit himself to them, because*
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he knew all Men: They were, possibly, perswaded, from the stupendous Works that were performed by our Saviour in their Sight, that he was no imposing Juggler, or a vain Pretender to a Mission from God, and that no Man could cause such Wonders except God had sent him, and assisted him by his infinite Power; but all this did only float in the Head without sinking into the Heart, Corruptions and Lusts reigned still within their Breasts, and our Saviour knew that this Assent of the Mind did not make them his faithful Subjects, but that notwithstanding thereof they were Enemies to his holy Kingdom amongst Men. Yea, not to insist upon particular Instances, what is more ordinary than for Persons to act contrary to their Light, to stifle or bear down Knowledge and Convictions, and to deny that God and Saviour in Works whom with their Understandings they believe to be their Redeemer? And in such a case, giving Credit to the Discoveries of Christ and Salvation through him in the Gospel, will be so far from giving them any Title to eternal Happiness, that it will make their Hell more intolerable and severe: An open Infidel is better than such an hypocritical Traitor, and affronts God less. To conclude this, it is expressly said of the Devils, that they *believe and tremble*: Their Understandings are too strong and lively to doubt of the Perfections of God, and of the Truth of what he reveals; they feel to their fatal Experience that the foolish cannot stand in his Sight, and that Tribulation and Anguish will be the Portion of every Soul that doth evil. And we find, that while the *Jews* were blinded in their Understandings and ignorant, the Persons who were possessed with

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with unclean Spirits frequently acknowledged Christ to be the *Messiah*, and the *Son of the living God*. So that, I hope, you are convinced that a bare giving Credit to what the Scripture teaches, is not that Faith wherewith we are justified: But that a Person may do so, and yet come short of Heaven and Happiness through Christ. May we be careful and diligent that we do not deceive our Souls by such false Hopes, or imitate Sinners in the many Ways they invent to speak Peace to themselves, while they have no Foundation for Security and Ease. But to proceed,

The *second* Act of true saving Faith, is our Approbation of and Consent to the Method of Grace proposed to us in the Gospel, of the Person, Offices and Laws of the Redeemer: This is the Notion given of it by the Apostle, *Rom. x. 10. With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness*. And Philip tells the Eunuch, *that if he believed with all his Heart he might be baptized*. The Assent of the Understanding is not only to be understood hereby; but a Compliance of the Will and Affections, whereby this Redeemer is embraced by the Soul, is admired, loved and accepted.

Men may be perswaded of the Truth of what the Scripture teaches, and yet their unrenewed Souls dislike and disrelish it: The Gospel-method fills them with Enmity and Rage, and their Lusts make it displeasing to them: Vanity and Pride induce them to reject a Salvation, in the purchasing whereof they themselves have no Share, or the being clothed with a Righteousness that is not their own; and this is powerful enough with them, to hinder their Souls from a Compliance with the Grace of God in Christ Jesus: They
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are so filled by sensible Pleasures with empty Greatness, and external Glory and Dignity, that they hate and despise a Christ crucified, he is a Stumbling-block to them, and their Souls are not influenced by a Method of Salvation that they so little love or esteem, and which is so contrary to their gross carnal Appetites. So that though such a Person may have some Persuasion of divine Truths, yet his natural Mind can never have a spiritual discerning and Relish of Christ and his Offers: Nor can he endure the Thoughts of a Saviour, whose Religion lays upon all its Followers the highest Obligations to Holiness in all manner of Conversation, and to a forsaking of every Sin, this scars him at the Redeemer; hence *he is despised and rejected by Men*, who are only charmed with the fading and false Beauties of Sin and Sense, and thus their Iniquities like the Wind carry them away from him.

But a Person who has true Faith *believes with the Heart*, he accounts and embraces it as *a faithful Saying worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ came into the World to save Sinners, Christ and he crucified are to his Soul the Wisdom and the Power of God*: He is ravished with all the Steps taken by God in recovering Sinners, and he would not wish there had been any Alteration made in them; the Person of Christ is amiable to his Soul, and engages all his Affections, not only as he is the *Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the mighty God*, but as he emptied and humbled himself for our sakes, his Debasement is lovely as his Exaltation. An unrenewed Sinner might be pleased with the Saviour, if he had come into the World a mighty Monarch, with great outward Pomp and Splendor,
and

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and proposed to his Followers Places of Power and Profit under a temporal King. But true Faith forsakes these natural Notions and Wishes, and, discerning with a spiritual Eye and acting from a new Nature, sees the Glory of the invisible God through the Vail of his Flesh: The Sufferings of Jesus Christ, his *enduring the Shame*, his being *rejected and despised by Men*, and there being no outward Form and Comeliness in him who was numbred with the Transgressors, are so far from making Believers contemn and undervalue him, that they engage their Love and Esteem. True Faith makes the Heart, the Will and Affections, as well as the Mind and Understanding, despise the vain foolish Schemes of Philosophers and the Wisdom of this Earth, and cry out, *Where is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World? Hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World? For the Preaching of the Cross, though it be to them that perish Foolishness, is to him the Power of God.* The Offence of the Cross is with him ceased, and he is in some Measure the same with the Apostle Paul, Gal. vi. 14. *But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is crucified unto me and I unto the World.* In short, the whole Person and Work of the Messiah are altogether lovely, so that he is all fair and no Spot in him, and his Love is better than Wine, and the Smell of his Ointments than all Spices.

The Heart of a true Believer approves also of the Terms of Salvation. He throws away all his own Righteousness, and hopes in no Merit of his own; the white Raiment of the Saints is the only Object of his Desire and Pursuit, nor is he at all fretted at the Thoughts of going out of himself and

and rolling his Soul upon Christ, but with Joy *he comes heavy laden and wearied unto him, and so receives him.*

He acknowledges the Redeemer as the great Prophet and Teacher of the Church, and delights to be instructed by him; and he owns him as his King and Lord: Were there no other Objection against Christ, this would prevail upon a wicked carnal Soul never to embrace him for a Saviour, that his Government is inviolably holy, and his Laws enjoin the highest Purity, and leave no lurking Place for any Sin, but command to depart from all Iniquity. But this Faith purifieth the Soul of every one that is possessed thereof, and makes it willing to have the *Messiah* Governor in the midst of it, and with full Consent of Heart to yield himself obedient to the Sceptre of his Kingdom. While the wicked forget God, and are led captive by every tyrannical Lust and Passion, though they fancy that they are free and glory in their Shame; while they abhor the Restraints of Holiness as intolerable and severe, and imagine it a Slavery to be subjected to their God and Redeemer: The Language of true Faith, approving and consenting to the strictest of his Precepts, cries out from the Bottom of the Soul, *How lovely, O God, is thy Law, which thou hast laid me under the highest Obligations to obey by my Redeemer? It is sweeter to me than the Honey and the Honey-comb, surely its Commandments are not grievous, but all its Paths are Pleasantness and perfect Peace.* Let the Unbeliever esteem it a Servitude to have 'thee for their King, I know it is the Glory of the rational Nature to serve the Redeemer, and I feel it is the truest Bliss to be a Subject of thy Kingdom. How

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happy, infinitely so, is he, who, freed from the deceitful Embraces of Sin, the Disgrace and Ruin of the Soul and the Pollution of Life, is enabled to obey all thy Commandments? I love, I admire and adore my God and Redeemer, that he not only is my Prophet and Priest, but because he becomes my King, that I may be his faithful Subject: I desire to abandon all other Lords, to have none in Heaven or Earth besides him: It is the Joy of my Soul that I shall at length be set above the Attacks of Temptation, and be as holy as I am commanded: And it is the Sorrow of my Life that there are Remains of this Body of Death, and that in every Thing I thereby come short of the Glory of God; but it shall be the constant Endeavour of my Life to mortifie and slay it, that I may obey Christ: I approve of this Captain of Salvation, as he delivers me from my self, my own corrupted Nature: I do not esteem the most spiritual and enlarged Extent of the Law, or the perfectest Holiness an unreasonable Burden; but my Heart consents to that Religion which obliges me to aspire after the highest Degrees of it.

Further, true Faith approves of every Method and Mean God takes to carry on the Work of Grace to Perfection, and to make the Believer *meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. When his Lord commands him to give a Proof of the Sincerity of his Faith, by Sufferings and a forsaking all the Allurements of Life, he does not repine at the Cross, but *takes it up and follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*. This is the Language of Faith: Every Thing is amiable and endearing whereby I may obey my Redeemer, and be made conformed to him: I don't follow him for
... the

the Miracles or the Loaves, but in all the Views of this Saviour he is lovely: And while the mighty Man glories in his Might, or the rich Man in his Riches, I'll glory ever in Tribulation, and esteem the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt: I count it all Joy, and believe that God crowns Man with Honour and Glory, when he accounts him worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ: I approve, O Lord, of all thy Ways, and even of the many Tribulations which ly in the Way to the Kingdom, and rejoyce to fill up what is behind of the Sufferings of Christ; for the heaviest Chains, when born for him, are an Ornament, his Yoke is easie and his Burden is light: I will by thy Strength surmount Death and Danger, and not be afraid, that I may know Christ, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable to his Death. In short, this Act of Faith, we are speaking of, upon a sedate and considerate View, and from an inward Feeling, consents to all the Doctrine of Grace; it tastes and sees that the Lord is good.

Thus you see how difficult and hard a Work Faith is, and that it is not to be attained to by lazy faint Endeavours: Which should make us very diligent and laborious to bring our Souls up to this noble Grace. But to proceed,

In the third Place, the principal Act of Faith is a relying on the Redeemer alone for Salvation, the resting and trusting in him for eternal Life. Such Expressions, however vilified and ridiculed by some who would impose upon the World a new Scheme of Divinity, and turn Christianity into refined Heathenism and a bare Morality, are the Dialect of the Scriptures. It is said of the Rem-

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nant of Israel, *Isa. x. 20. That they should stay up-
on the Lord the holy One of Israel: And Chap. l. 10.
Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth
the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darkness, and
hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord,
and stay upon his God. And this we are to under-
stand by these Phrases in the New Testament, He
gave Power to them to become the Sons of God who belie-
ved on his Name, he that believeth on the Son hath e-
verlasting Life, to him give all the Prophets. Witness
that through his Name, whosoever believeth in him
shall receive the Remission of Sins.*

The principal and peculiar Object whereupon
this Faith acts, is the Priesthood of Christ, and that
both with respect to his Obedience and Sufferings,
whereby we are freed from the Guilt of our Trans-
gressions and have a Title to the heavenly Glory:
And this includes in it.

1. A sincere Renunciation of all other Ways of
Salvation. They make mention of the Righteousness of
the Lord, and of his only: The noblest Creature,
the most exalted Angel, or the perfectest Saint
have no Share of their Confidence in this Matter;
they are perswaded that there is but one Mediator
betwixt God and Sinners, and that all others are but
Figments of a vain Imagination, broken Reeds
that will not be able to support those who lean
upon them; they put no Trust in the Flesh; and,
knowing that their best Performances come far
short of their Duty, and that all our Righteousnesses
are but as filthy Rags, they throw them to the Moles and
Bats; yea, they have no Hope even in the Mercy
and Grace of God, except as it works towards us
in Christ, for without the Redeemer he is a con-
suming Fire.

And

And then in the *second* Place he lays hold upon Jesus for his All, as the *Author and Finisher of eternal Salvation to him*: And that, 1. for the Pardon of Sin. We are liable to the Curse of the Law, by Nature Children of Wrath; and before we can have any Place in the divine Favour, the Demands of Justice must be answered, and this Christ as a Priest hath fully performed, when he was made Sin for us, and the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him: Then by once offering of himself he for ever made an End of Sin and finished Transgression. And this Satisfaction is what alone a true Believer relies upon for Pardon: He will not come before God with Rivers of Oyl, and the Cattle upon a Thousand Hills, or offer the Fruit of his Body for the Sin of his Soul: He does not bring in Purgatory or Penances to this Purpose; for he knows that if God should mark Iniquity none can stand; that it is Christ alone whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, Rom. iii. 25. In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace. Eph. i. 7. And God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them, II. Cor. v. 19. So that true Faith throws the Soul for Pardon and Peace entirely upon the Blood of Christ's Cross.

2dly. Before we can be brought to Heaven and attain to immortal Bliss, we must not only have our Sins forgiven us, but we must have a Righteousness wherewith to appear before God, and found our Claim to the Prize of the high Calling of God. Now, the Believer is convinced that it were unworthy of God, and contrary to the Gospel, for him, whose Holiness the Angels so much

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reverence and adore, to accept of any Services mixed with Sin; and that it is a debasing and prostituting of God's Purity, to imagine that by the Works of the Law any Sinner can be justified; therefore he concludes that a *Man is justified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law.* Hence, abandoning all other Coverings and Pretenses, he lays hold upon the perfect Obedience of the Son of God, the white Raiment of the Saints, pure and clean; and when he appears before his Maker, 'tis only with this Wedding Garment.

The Faith we are speaking of is excellently explained to us by the Apostle *Paul*, and with the greatest Clearness and Evidence, *Phil. iii. 7, &c.* But what Things were Gain to me, those I counted Loss for Christ: Yea doubtless, and I count all Things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and do count them but Dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith. Thus Faith makes Believers like the Branches of the Vine, all their Verdure, the Beauty and Sweetness of their Grapes proceed from the Root and the Juice which it sends up; lop them off from the Root they wither and decay. So it is only by the Redeemer's Obedience that we can be justified before God, and that we can bear any acceptable Fruit to our Lord: 'Tis hence we are beautified and saved, we are made comely by his Comeliness put upon us. Thus Faith throws the Soul entirely upon this great high Priest, as he is sent of God and proposed to us in the Gospel: This is the Anchor of the Soul sure and steadfast, which

which will ride it out safe notwithstanding of the most furious Storms: Thus by Faith Christ becomes to the Believer all in All. I shall put an End to what I have discoursed upon this Head, by laying before you, in the *fourth Place*, an Account of Faith given by a very great Divine, * which seems to me to open up very much of its Nature and Excellency. "It is, says he, the "Heart's Approbation of the Way of Justification "and Salvation of Sinners by Jesus Christ proposed in the Gospel, as proceeding from the Grace, "Wisdom, and Love of God, with its Acquiescence "therein, as unto its own Concernment and "Condition." And, in another Place, "it is an "Ascription of that Glory to God which he designs to exalt; the Acknowledgment of all those "glorious Properties of the divine Nature, as "manifested in the Provision and Proposition of "this Way of Life, Righteousness and Salvation: "Thus being strong in Faith they give Glory to "God. ***

N. B. *This Discourse was two Sermons that were preached in a Church near Edinburgh, the Forenoon and Afternoon of the same Day, and therefore it is not divided. What the Author preached further, on the Heads proposed, Page 225. is not found amongst his Papers.*

* Dr. Owen on Justification, Chap. 2.





SERMON XI.

II. TIM. ii. 19. *And let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity.*



Tis an amazing Instance, and an undeniable Proof of the fatal Ignorance and Inconsideration Men labour under, and of the Force of beloved Corruptions whereby they maintain such a Sway over all our Thoughts, and lead us captive at their Pleasure, that Men not only forget God, which is at once to throw away all valuable Knowledge and undeceiving Happiness; and spend their Years in open Debauches, without a Terror of that God whom they banish from their Souls, or any Influence of a future Judgment and eternal State upon their Minds, that are possessed with present Enjoyments:

joyments: But that even such who read the Scriptures, give some Credit to what is revealed in them and pretend to be regulated by them, should yet indulge themselves in Sin; which is so plainly and so frequently declared in these Oracles of Truth, to be provoking to God and destructive to the Workers of it.

It is no rare Thing in the World, for Men that profess that holy Religion, which every where lays before us the highest Obligations to Purity in Heart and Life, and the dreadfulest Threatnings against the disobedient, at the same Time to flatter their Souls in bowing down to some beloved Idol, and fancy themselves into Hopes, that *the calling Christ Lord, Lord, and coming before him as his People*, will entitle them to his Favour, though they be at no or very small Pains to *do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*: Such is the prevailing Influence of sinful Pleasures over corrupted Souls, that they'll rather run the greatest Hazard, and believe the plainest Contradiction, than be disturbed from a fatal Security in the Paths of Iniquity, and endeavour after Holiness, of the Beauties whereof they are ignorant, and its refined Joys are not palatable and pleasing to their gross carnal Tastes. Few Men, who have not altogether drowned Thought with a continued Torrent of Vice and Debauch, but would desire to get to Heaven if they could attain to it upon their own Terms: *Balaam's Wish is a pretty universal one, that he might die the Death of the Righteous, and that his latter End might be like theirs.* Hence it is, that many who have no Portion in the Glory that shall be revealed, and are far from true Religion, nevertheless imagine that *their naming the Name of Christ*, ab-
stain-

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staining from some gross outward Sins, and practising external Duties, may afford them a sufficient Foundation for Peace and Hope: And thus they fall asleep in a false Security, without striving after a thorough Reformation of their Souls, and a universal Obedience in every Part of Life.

Now as there can be nothing more dangerous, and be followed with more terrible Consequences to the Souls of Men, than for them thus to cheat and deceive themselves: It is my Design at this Time, by the Assistance of God, to shew, that the Grace and Mercy of Christ in the Gospel, is so far from giving the least Encouragement to the lowest Degree of Sin, or lessening the Obligations to Holiness, that it ~~teaches~~ all those to whom it is discovered, by the most powerful Arguments, to *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*; and that we have the most convincing Evidence, that any who pretend to be saved by this Grace, without endeavouring thus to exercise themselves to obey the divine Laws in all manner of Conversation, do only amuse their Souls with the vain Hope of a Hypocrite, which shall certainly perish; and that we Christians are, by this Character, laid under very peculiar Obligations to aspire after the highest Degrees of Holiness, and to indulge our selves in no Sin: For *let every one who nameth the Name of Christ depart from Iniquity.*

The Apostle Paul, in this Chapter, gives many excellent Instructions to *Timothy*, how to behave himself with Honour and Faithfulness, as clothed with the Character of a Minister of Christ, particularly in the 15 and 16 Verses, he perswades him to apply himself principally to inculcate these Things upon the Minds

Minds of Men, which had a Tendency to prepare them for Heaven, and carry them further in the Christian Life: But to shun Disputes that either lead to profane Error, or consisted only in empty Speculations, which might amuse the Fancy, but could never kindle the Heart into divine Love. In the 17. and 18. Verses, he gives an Instance of some of those abominable Opinions which were then propagated in the Heresy of *Hymeneus* and *Philletus*, who maintained that the Resurrection was past already. And to these he subjoyns the Verse, a Part whereof we have made Choice of for the Subject of this Discourse.

Some Commentators explain the Words thus. That though these two Apostates had departed from the Faith, yet this did not in the least weaken the Certainty of the Perseverance of true Believers: Because the Foundation or Election of God remained sure and steady, for it had this Seal, that the Lord knoweth, that is, loveth them that were his; so that he assuredly would carry them to the End of their Faith: Whereas the falling away of the others was a Proof that they never belonged to the true Church. And upon this account all who would not come under the Condemnation of Hypocrites, had the greatest Necessity to depart from Iniquity.

Others think it more agreeable to the Design of this Place, to understand by the Foundation of God the Doctrine of the Resurrection, of which he had been speaking, and which was a fundamental Article of the Christian Faith: And that though it was denied by some Hereticks, yet it remained a certain Truth; for it had this Seal, that God knew or approved, and would bear out them that were his, namely, the Apostles, who preached this Doctrine,
and

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and acted by his Commission in maintaining it against all its Opposers.

I shall not fix upon any one of these Explications, because it would take up more of your Time to examine thoroughly into them than I can spend upon it. I design therefore to consider the Text as an entire Proposition by it self, without discoursing so fully of the Influence it has from the preceeding Argument. And it contains these two Things.

1. We have a Character that was pretended to by some Persons, a Profession which they made, *naming the Name of Christ*: By which, in short, we are to understand an owning Jesus for their Lord and Redeemer, a subjecting themselves to his Doctrine and Laws, and aspring after eternal Salvation through him, and it seems to have a particular Regard to what is said *Acts xi. 26.* that *the Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch*, this was the Name they were known by, they were named by the Name of Christ.

2dly. We have a peculiar Obligation upon all these that were clothed with that Character, and owned that Name, *Let them depart from Iniquity*. All Men, as Subjects to the divine Government, were bound to abhor every wicked Way, and to avoid every Thing that was unbecoming the Duty they owed to their Sovereign: But there were special Ties arising from the Profession of Christianity, to Diligence and Vigour in abandoning Iniquity, and to the Practice of Holiness, beyond what such as never knew or owned Christ, were laid under. From these Words we may draw this Observation as the Foundation of the following Discourse.

The Profession of Christianity, the naming the holy Jesus as the Lord, to whose Honour we have dedicated our selves and Services, as that Captain
of

of Salvation under whose Conduct alone we hope for the Glory of Heaven, and whom we own as our great Teacher, Priest and King, lays us under the highest Obligations to sincere Obedience to all the Commands of God, and contains the strongest Arguments to engage us never to indulge and flatter our selves in the smallest Sin, but with unwearied Endeavours to flee from the least Remains of it. *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from Iniquity.* In discoursing to you from this Truth, I shall do these Things.

1. I shall give you a short View of what is included in *naming the Name of Christ.*

2^{dly}. I shall lay before you a very few Things to illustrate what is meant by *departing from Iniquity.*

3^{dly}. I shall apply my self, at some length, to prove the Certainty of the Observation, and propose a few of the numerous Considerations, whereby we Christians are very peculiarly obliged, from our Profession and Character, thus to *depart from Iniquity*, and exercise our selves to true Holiness.

As to the two *first* Things I have proposed, I do not design to give any ways a full Account of them: I shall only, for Method's sake, give a few Hints as to each of them, which may serve to introduce me to the Third Head I have mentioned, which I mainly purpose to insist upon and explain.

1. Then, to give a short View of what is included in *naming the Name of Christ.* It supposes a Person's Knowledge of his Nature and Doctrine, his being instructed that *Jesus of Nazareth* was the mighty God, the Lord of Angels and Men, who came into our World and tabernacled amongst us, and,

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and, having paid a complete Obedience to all the Laws of God without any Stain or Defect; endured the Cross and despised the Shame; and thus was made a Captain of Salvation perfect through Sufferings, and the Author of eternal Life to all who obey him; and that, having risen again from the dead, he was thereby declared the Son of God with Power, and a perfect Saviour, and is now an exalted Prince to give Repentance and Remission of Sins. In short, it supposes that the Person is in some Measure acquainted with the sacred Oracles, where God has revealed his Will and the Doctrine of Christ the Redeemer unto Mankind, whence we may draw the Knowledge of him. Further, a naming the Name of Christ is a putting our selves under the Conduct of this Saviour, an avouching him for the Foundation of all our Hope, and the Lord of all our Actions; an acknowledging our Subjection to his Laws, and Confidence in his Power, that we will serve no other Master, and that 'tis in him and by his Righteousness alone we shall do valiantly. In a Word, it is an embracing the Religion of Christ in Opposition to all other Professions. This naming of Christ may also have a particular Respect to any more solemn Ties we are brought under to Christ, by publick Acknowledgments of the Christian Faith; such as at Baptism, when we are initiated into it; or at the receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when we give our own Consent to the Duties laid upon us at Baptism, and take an Oath to this Lord as his faithful and good Soldiers, for whenever we approach that holy Table, we very solemnly name the Name of Christ; and are bound by new Arguments to depart from Iniquity.

The

The *second* Thing proposed, was to lay before you a very few Things to illustrate what is meant by *departing from Iniquity*. And this is the more necessary, because too many entertain easy Notions of Religion, and flatter their Vanity and Security into an Opinion of their having forsaken Iniquity, while Sin really continues to govern their Souls by the most arbitrary and uncontrouled Rule. If they don't wallow in some Pleasures which perhaps they have no great Inclination to, and avoid some Excesses to which others are carried, though at the same time they be guilty of as vicious Practices, or are enslaved to a Sin which easily besets them; or if they are not abandoned to an avowed Contempt of God, and an open Disobedience to his plainest Laws, though they remain ignorant of a Religion that must pierce into the Heart, and govern within the Breast; they please themselves, and fancy that God is so low with them, as if he would buy off the Commission of one Sin by indulging them in another, and would endure a hidden Traitor, who by a corrupted Heart and false Profession undermines his Government, because he does not break out into open Rebellion. But they are fatally mistaken, for if we would *depart from Iniquity*, we must forsake every wicked Way, and not be content with being conformed to the Letter of the Law. We must endeavour to be directed by it in its enlarged Extent, and refined Spirituality; we must not entertain one Idol, but throw them all out of our Hearts and Lives: The most pleasing Allurements of Sin must be sacrificed to our Duty to Christ; that we may obey him, *the right Eye, and right Hand must be cut off*, or if they have seated themselves in our Heart we must pull it out.

Further

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Further he does not depart from Iniquity, who only forsakes what he knows, except he be vigorous and active in endeavouring to discover secret Sins : And we must not be lazy and languishing herein, but search into the innermost Recesses of our Soul, the Designs and Springs of our Actions, as well as the Matter of them, that no Evil may lurk undiscovered from our View, and we must be careful not to let any of these Enemies to our Souls slip by, under the Vizard of a Duty and the Pretext of Obedience ; knowing that Sin, as the great Tempter to it Satan, would often pass upon us as an Angel of Light.

Further he that departs from Iniquity must watch the first Motions of his Lusts, and put a Stop to Rebellion against our Maker, while it is a plotting before it be ready for Execution. We read of the Depths and Devices of Satan, whereby he ensnares Men to the Paths of Death : If some gross Vices were at the first presented to us without a Disguise, they might fright our Consciences, and the Devil mis his End ; but our cunning Enemy does not shew himself oft-times till he hath prepared the Soul, and gradually drawn it into the Love of the Sin : It is impossible for us to imagine how imperceptibly he works it into the Affections of Sinners, weakens Grace and strengthens Corruption, till we become an easie Prey to his open Attacks : The first Movings of our Lusts, which we easily slip over, lead to higher Acts, till we come at length to wallow in Vice without Remorse or Check. Some Poisons occasion immediately sensible Effects, and we sooner see the Danger, while others, though they make slower yet no less sure Destruction, don't appear in the Skin till they have infected the Heart and

and corrupted the Blood ; and these may be more dangerous, for the Disease consumes the Vitals before the Physician be applied to : So Sin is of a deceitful beguiling Nature, if we don't examine our State, and guard against the least Infecter, it will poison us to Death before we be awakned ; and this crafty Serpent will insinuate it self into our Freindship, and acquire a Power over us which we can't shake off before we discover that it is an Enemy. He therefore that would depart from Iniquity, must guard the Avenues to his Soul, and keep the Heart with all keeping, lest the smallest Sin lurk in it : And when he discovers any, their Littleness will not hinder him from mortifying and slaying them ; but he will abstain from every Appearance of Evil, and rather not allow himself the Liberty he might lawfully take than run the Hazard of being enticed into what is forbidden.

But as it is not enough that a Man be free from Transgressions of God's Law, for he is obliged to obey it : So he that departs from Iniquity to any valuable Purposes, will endeavour after universal and sincere Holiness, and, far from lazily resting upon external Obedience, leaving the Things that are behind, will press forward to a more elevated Purity, till the Love of God possess all his Soul ; and banish out of it lesser Objects, till God be his chiefest Joy, and the highest Pleasure his Soul can be ravished with be to obey his Commandments. When his Thoughts, Projects and Designs will be above the Clouds, and his Treasures be higher than they, such a Man will soar aloft, and trample upon the debased Pleasures of Sense, which foolish Sinners so much dote upon as unworthy their Pursuit ; and consequently he must despise every unfair mean Way of

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gaining the Riches of this Earth, the Power of an eternal Life will exalt him above Trick and Treachery : But Honesty and Justice, Truth and Sincerity will be carried along all his Actions ; for he considers that he is an Heir to a Crown and Kingdom, and that he ought to have no Designs, and take no Measures that are unworthy of such noble Views as Immortality and Life. In short, he must aim at perfect and universal Purity, and go on from Strength to Strength, till he be possessed of that Holiness which is the Beauty and Ornament of the Angels in Heaven. All these Things I have mentioned are his Desire and Endeavour, and so far as he fails of this he comes short of *departing from Iniquity*.

Thus I have given you only some short Hints relating to the two first Things I proposed, and shall now proceed to what I principally designed, *namely*, in the 3^d. Place to apply my self at some length to prove the Certainty of the Observation, and propose a few of the numerous Considerations, whereby we Christians are peculiarly obliged from our Profession and Character thus to *depart from Iniquity*, and exercise our selves to true Holiness. I might shew at large, upon this Subject, that we have hence the greatest Advantages and Motives to Obedience, that Sin in us is peculiarly and dreadfully aggravated, and that the most fatal and destructive Effects must inevitably follow upon it : But as I cannot go through these fully and in order, I shall lay before you some of the most remarkable Things upon this Head ; and I will confine my self to the Arguments for Holiness, as they arise in particular from the Christian Religion, and our *naming the Name of Christ*.

1. Hence we have the clearest Revelation of our
Duty

Should depart from Iniquity. 275

Duty in all its Parts, and know our Master's Will: We profess hereby to believe our Bibles which *are able to make us wise to Salvation*: We are not left to wander in the Wilderness of our own dark Reasonings, and to draw doubtful Consequences from uncertain Principles; but what we ought to practise is held forth to us by the Doctrine of Christ, in the brightest Manner: We may, without a laborious Search into Philosophy, discover how to *keep a Conscience void of Offence to God and Man*; for we have Precept upon Precept so plain that he who runs may read them: Yea, we have not only these Advantages which the heathen World was deprived of, but we enjoy a great many beyond the *Jews*.

I may, without any Disregard to the divine Inspiration of the Old Testament, assert of the great Prophet of the Gospel-church, that *he spake as never Man spake*: We can now be in no Doubt about the Spirituality of the Law, and the enlarged Extent of it to all the Thoughts and Actions of Men, or bring any Cloke from its being *said by these of old Time*; for our blessed Saviour has often inculcated our Duty upon us, and in the Scriptures of the New Testament it shines with the fullest Light: And, which makes it still plainer, we have a perfect Pattern of true Holiness in the various Circumstances of the Life of our Redeemer, this is a sure and tried Example, which we may copy after without fear of a Blemish; here we see the divine Law lived over, and obeyed so as God himself shall approve thereof. O bright and glorious Day! a Sun without Spots, and in which there is no Darkness at all, which enlightens all the Parts of a Christian's Life: This is that Star by which we may guide our Course through the most diffi-

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cult and untroden Paths, and can never wander till we cease looking unto it. We are not in Danger, as the *Israelites*, to be misled by *Moses*, if we should follow him at the Waters of *Meribah*: For the Law of God is not more perfect in it self than the Life of our Saviour, and the Explication we have of it in the New Testament. How wicked and foolish are they who extinguish this Light, or neglect to improve it?

So that you see how peculiarly Christians are obliged to Holiness, from the Fulness and Clearness of the Doctrine of Christ; since they can have no Excuse, no Cloke for their Sin, nor will they be able to plead Ignorance to extenuate their Guilt. Let us then, who enjoy such an excellent Revelation, leave Error and Vice to such as want our Means and Knowledge, and esteem it a Reproach and Disgrace to us to imitate the ignorant and blind. Let us from our naming the Name of Christ, that great unerring Prophet, obey the Apostle's Exhortation, *I Thess. v. 5, &c. Ye are all the Children of the Light, and the Children of the Day: We are not of the Night, nor of Darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the Night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the Night. But let us who are of the Day, be sober, putting on the Breast-plate of Faith and Love, and for an Helmet the Hope of Salvation.*

2dly. As we have the plainest Discoveries of our Duty from the Doctrine of Christ, so we are not left to the Discouragement and Despair of an Inability to perform it without Remedy; for the Gospel is the Power as well as Wisdom of God to all who believe. Men are by Nature impotent and weak, and feel the mighty Power of Temptations, that they

they have a superior Force to our best Purposes and firmest Resolutions; and it must be a mighty Advantage to Satan in turning of Mens Thoughts from a virtuous Life, whenever he has a Pretext to urge, that they will only create Uneasiness and Toil to themselves, and will not be able to overcome the Inclinations of their Nature: This makes them swim with the Stream, and not strive against insuperable Difficulties, they plunge themselves deeper and deeper into the Mire of Sin and Sense, because they find it so uneasie to rise altogether above it. But now, when we name the Name of Christ, we profess to believe in one who is mighty to save, and is more powerful than all the Enemies of our Souls, and has given the most illustrious Proofs of it in his many Triumphs over Satan's Kingdom, when he makes his Slaves free with the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God. He hath bruised the Tempter's Head, and is able to conquer all his Foes: In him are hid the Treasures of a Grace that will be sufficient for us, and of Strength which will be perfected in Weakness.

So that Christians have a great Motive to Holiness from this Consideration, that *their Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, that stronger is he who works in them that believe than he who tyrannizes over the Children of Disobedience: They have a Fountain of Courage and Strength, whence they may supply all their Weaknesses; so that Sin should no more have Dominion over them, because they are under so powerful a Grace. This should animate us against Faintness and Languishing, not to be frightened by the tallest Lusts though they may be terrible, as *Anakims*, or despair when attacked by the utmost Efforts of Hell; because our Sufficiency is of God,

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and the Captain under whom we fight has con-
quered *Principalities and Powers, led Captivity captive,*
and is able to make all his Followers more than Con-
querors. Let us then, with unwearied Diligence,
depart even from that Iniquity which has the greatest
Influence over our Souls: For the Rod of Christ's
Power can subdue us into Freedom, should Devils
and our Corruptions joyn all their Forces to oppose
him; though vain is the Help of Man, through God
we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down
our Enemies.

3dly. Such as name the Name of Christ ought to de-
part from Iniquity, because they have the most al-
luring Promises and the noblest Happiness to en-
gage them to it. The Heathens had some dark
Views of a Blessedness that was to be the Reward
of good Men, and this, no doubt, was a Support
to some of them; but then they were uncertain
about it, they were led by Conjectures, and had
no Foundation for a firm Faith that any of the
Sons of Men could attain to it: And even the
Jews under the Old Testament were left much in
the Clouds as to this Matter, and the Glory of
Heaven was held forth in Types to them by the Milk
and Honey of Canaan, and for want of fuller Dis-
coveries they were mightily discouraged and kept
in Bondage. But our Saviour Jesus Christ hath
abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality
to Light through the Gospel. We have now not a mere
Probability alone, but the highest Evidence, that
God will bestow upon Christians a Crown and a
Kingdom, that is as far beyond the Glory and true
Worth of a Diadem here below, as the Dust of the
Earth where Mortals reign, is inferior in Beauty
and Stability to that House whose Builder is God.

What

What a mighty Encouragement, and how moving an Argument to Holiness, ought the Professors of Christianity to be excited by, and to how fervent Diligence in it, that they know that *Death shall be swallowed up by Victory*, and that *they shall be ever with the Lord if they patiently continue in well doing?* How little ought the most splendid Offers of Sin and Satan weigh with us, who are under the Power of eternal Life; especially since we are assured, that by the Resurrection of Christ he is able to bring us to that Happiness, and that *our vile Bodies shall then be made like to his glorious Body*, though, with all their Beauty and Splendor, they will be but an Emblem of the Dignity and Honour of the Souls united to them? Christians are certainly guilty of the Extreme of Folly, and the most extravagant Wickedness, if ever they delay to *depart from Iniquity*, when they have such an excellent Glory assured to them as the Reward of doing so.

4thly. As God never appeared so amiable as to such who know and profess Christ, so his Terrors are no where more dreadful than they are in the Doctrine of the Gospel: Thus he that *nameth the Name of Christ* ought at the same Time to be allured to Obedience by the Grace and Mercies of God, and frightened from Iniquity by the awful Severity of his inviolable Justice.

I shall not now insist upon the many very express Threatnings we have against Sin, which shew us our Hazard: But only consider the Argument to this Purpose taken from the Sufferings of Christ, which ought to deter us more from every Sin, than all the Miseries of the Damned were they laid open before us. For these are but a faint

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Emblem of God's Hatred to Sin and the dreadful Evil of it, when compared with the full Demonstration of its Greatness, in what the Father said upon our Redeemer when he bore our Iniquities. Shall Christians continue in the Ways of Wickedness, who profess to believe such an illustrious Proof, that no Consideration will ever move God to pass Sin unpunished, but that the heaviest Wrath will be infallibly poured on the Workers of it? O the fatal Stupidity of Christians! who make not all haste to forsake their Idols. Our Redeemer was in his own Person innocent, *never was there any Guile found in his Lips*, he was always beloved by God, for in him he was well pleased: Yet, when he was our Surety, his God so severely avenged Sin imputed to him, as to make him cry out, *that his Father had forsaken him*: And will he ever then spare us Wretches who are polluted and guilty, when he will have nothing to move him to stay his Hand from punishing us, but shall to Eternity shew his mighty Power in the Greatness of our sufferings? What Horror, what Shame and Confusion, and how gnawing will be the Worm of such who profess Christianity, when in Hell they shall reflect, that though they named that Name in which God had demonstrated that the foolish could never stand in his Sight, and that Threatnings against Sin should infallibly be fulfilled; yet they stupidly neglected all these Considerations without being influenced by them? May we, while it is yet to Day, be so wise as to depart from Iniquity, since we name the Name of Christ.

When

Lastly. When we profess the Christian Faith, we solemnly engage our selves to be sincerely holy, we give our Consent to the Law of God: So that by breaking it we prove treacherous as well as disobedient. Christ has often told us, that *except we do the Will of his Father in Heaven we are none of his Disciples*; and without Holiness it is impossible to see the Lord. A Profession of Religion, however clamorous and noisy, and the loudest Pretences to Faith in Christ, without it bear Fruit unto Holiness, is the vilest Hypocrisy. And there can be nothing more plainly expressed by Words, than that *a Follower of Jesus must have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*; and that, *if Christ be in us the Body must be dead because of Sin, but the Spirit alive because of Righteousness*: So that when we name the Name of Christ, we embrace his Religion upon these Terms, and bind our selves to *purifie our Souls even as God is pure*. Not only every Time that we partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is indeed the most solemn Engagement, we swear Obedience to the divine Law; but we never wait upon God in publick Ordinances, and mix our selves with the *Armies of Israel*, but we thereby profess to *depart from Iniquity*, and to fight against spiritual Wickednesses: So that every Sin of a Christian, how little so ever he may take notice of it, is a Breach of a thousand Oaths and the basest Treachery. How inconceivable Folly must it be then in Christians, to commit any Sin when their Character is so holy and pure? It is higher Guilt in them than it can possibly be in others, it is the utmost Contempt of God, the greatest Affront we can offer him, it is either in plain Terms to call him a Liar, and that it is all a Falshood

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shood and Fiction which the Oracles of God tell us, concerning the absolute Necessity of Holiness in order to pleasing him, that his Threatnings against Sin were never designed to be executed, and are only Bug-bears to fright Cowards, and that Sinners will be as acceptable to God as those who are sincerely pious : Or else, if we believe the Truth of the Scriptures, by committing Iniquity we insult his Power, and laugh at his Wrath. And can we fancy we will be able to harden our Hearts against infinite Fury, and irresistible Power ? How miserable, how inconceivably so, how deeply and intirely plunged into the most piercing tormenting Flames of the divine Vengeance, must a pretended Christian be, when God will punish his numerous Sins, every one of them loaded with the Weight of a betrayed Saviour, and a thousand Perjuries ? If we then be not resolved to *depart from Iniquity*, let us never again name the Name of Christ ; for it can be of no Advantage to us, and serves only to heat our Hell : We had better go openly over to the Devil's Camp, and own our selves his Slaves, than come before our Redeemer only with the Mouth, and betray him with a Kiss : Yea, it had been better for us not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered to us. Let us then from these Considerations be moved by the Force of the Apostle's Exhortation, *let every one who nameth the Name of Christ depart from Iniquity.*

6thly. Christians who indulge themselves in Vice, act in a direct Contradiction to the End of their Saviour's coming into the World. They are lulled asleep in Sin by his Mercy and Grace ; whereas for this Purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might
destroy

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destroy the Works of the Devil : He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. So that a Gospel Sinner is an Enemy to all the Grace and Glory of God ; for 'tis the Honour of his Grace, that it promotes Holiness and turns Men from their Foolishness : And as all his Perfections shine with an uncommon Lustre in the Redeemer's Face, it must be the highest Provocation to the God of our Life and Being, to debase and abuse the Gospel, but let us walk agreeably to the Apostle's Reasoning, *Heb. ix. 14.* *How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without Spot to God, purge your Conscience from dead Works to serve the living God ?*

Lastly. Such as name the Name of Christ ought to depart from Iniquity : Because by neglecting it they become in a very peculiar Manner Partakers of other Peoples Sins. We not only affront God our selves, but engage others to do so, and the Ruin of many Souls will come in to heighten our Torments. And that both with respect to such as are without the Church, we are a Scandal to them, and hinder them from embracing the true Religion which is disgraced by such as profess it ; what a Stumbling-block must it be to a sober Heathen and Jew, or to an honest *Mahumetan*, to behold Christians not a whit reformed in their Hearts and Lives, but as voluptuous and sensual, or base and deceitful as others ? And how bad a Notion must he thence entertain of Christianity it self ? And also with respect to those who in common with us name the Name of Christ, we draw them into the Fellowship of our Treachery and Rebellion, and are a Snare to their Souls. I shall not enlarge upon this
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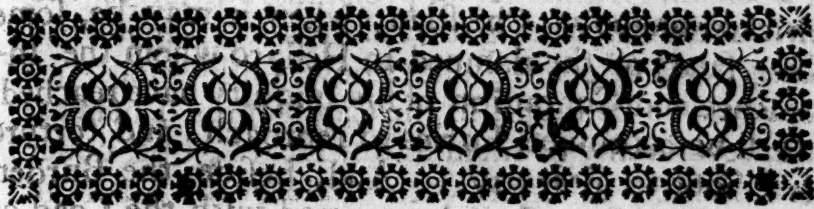
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Argument, but leave it to your cool Thoughts, to take a further Prospect of the dreadful State of a wicked ungodly Christian, when, it may be, some thousands of the damned in Hell, to whom the Influence and Contagion of his Iniquity have reached, shall be continued Furies to reproach and torture his Soul to Eternity : And, beside the Burden of his own Sins, shall be covered with the Load of their Damnation and Ruin.

Because the most Part of this Discourse has been directly practical, and it is already drawn out to a great enough Length, I shall put an End to it, by begging that God by his gracious Spirit would make deep Impressions of these Things upon our Souls, give us to be wise and to be taught, and, since *we name the Name of the holy Jesus, to depart from Iniquity.*



SER-



S E R M O N X I I.

EZEK. xvi. 63. *That thou mayst remember and be confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more because of thy Shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.*



IT is my Purpose at this Time, by the Assistance of God, to discourse a little to you upon the shameful and disgraceful Nature of Sin, and to shew, in some Instances, how just Reason those have to blush and be confounded, who depart from that God to whose Love and Service all of us are bound by the strongest Ties, especially such who profess the true Religion, and have voluntarily consecrated themselves to his Honour and Praise: That so we who have named the holy Name of Jesus Christ, and so often pretended to be his Followers, may now, when we have a Prospect of again mixing

mixing our selves with the Armies of *Israel*, and, in a solemn Ordinance, of professing our selves the faithful Servants and good Soldiers of *Messiah* the King ; and of coming under new Obligations never again to be found in the Camp of his Enemies, or entertain any of them in our Hearts, but, under his Conduct, to fight with persevering Courage and Resolution against those Principalities and Powers, which oppose their Force to the Glory of our Lord and the Salvation of our Souls, till at length we conquer and bring under Subjection those Lusts and Pleasures, and high rebellious Thoughts, by indulging of which we are drawn away from the Obedience of God : That, I say, we who have formerly made such Professions, may now, when we have a Prospect of renewing these Vows, remember how unanswerable the Practice of our Lives hath been to the Words of our Mouth, and to our Engagements to be the Redeemer's, when we last approached the Table of the Lord ; how lazy in his Service and languishing in his Love, how ungratefully we have broken his righteous Commandments, and treacherously complied with the Designs of his Enemies ; and, instead of making vigorous Advances in the Christian Life, and from the Meditation of his redeeming Love and incomprehensible Grace, of endeavouring to add greater Force to the Flame of divine Love, where-with our Souls ought to be more and more kindled, we have suffered the World and its Allurements to steal away our Affections, and have easily yielded to prevailing Temptations, whereby we have grown faint and cool in the Service of our Redeemer, and are guilty of the vilest Perjury : And that, from a Consideration of the Shame and Dif-

Disgrace of these our aggravated Iniquities, we may now, when God is notwithstanding of them yet offering to be *pacified towards us, be confounded, and never open our Mouth any more, because of our Shame.*

In this Chapter, God shews the Justice of the Punishments he had already inflicted upon the *Jews*, and how much heavier Calamities they still deserved, because of their infamous Treachery in his Covenant, and the ungrateful undutiful Returns they made for the innumerable Benefits wherewith he had loaded them. The *Jews* had all along, from the first Beginnings of their State, been the peculiar Care of the divine Providence, and the Objects of its special Favours : God separated them from the Nations, and entred into a Covenant with them, whereby they solemnly engaged to be obedient to his Laws, and had an assured Title to his omnipotent Protection, which he never failed to afford them while they did not rebel against him : He brought them from the *Egyptian* Slavery by a Train of Miracles, and continued to guard them from Destruction and to conquer their Enemies ; he went out before the Armies of *Israel*, and, whenever they fought under his Conduct, he inspired them with such Courage and Might, that *one of them could have chased a Thousand, and ten put ten Thousand to Flight* ; he seated them quietly in the Land of *Canaan*, and never failed to maintain them in a secure Possession of it, whenever they in Sincerity sought his Help : So that they *dwelt alone and were not reckoned amongst the Nations* ; for *the Lord their God was with them, and the Shout of a King was among them.* And though thus the Pleasures of a Land flowing with Milk and Honey were every where scattered

tered in their Borders, yet this was but the least Effect of the divine Goodness ; for *he gave his Statutes unto Jacob, and his Testimonies unto Israel* : While all the Nations round about them were buried in Wickedness and Ignorance, the Law of their God shone amongst them, a Lamp to direct their Paths in this World, and light them in the Way to Immortality and Life : When *he saw them polluted in their own Blood, he said unto them, Live*, and not only became their King and Governor, but their covenanted God, and *their Maker was their Husband* : And though they proved treacherous and unfaithful, yet, how oft did he in Pity forgive their Folly, and restrained his Wrath ? These were Mercies which called for the highest Returns of Love and Praise : But they soon forgot his Works, they waited not for his Counsel, yea, exceeded, in their Idolatry and Wickedness, the worst of the Gentiles : They stupidly adored the Gods of the Nations which were conquered by them, and were so prone to Disobedience, as if they strove with God to outdo his Mercies and Goodness by their Treachery and Rebellion ; for *they played the Harlot with many Lovers*, and set no Bounds to their backsliding, so that they went beyond, in Impiety, Sodom and Samaria, those Places that had been most notorious for Wickedness. All which is very pathetically and movingly represented in this Chapter, and severe Judgments are threatned to be poured out upon such incorrigible Sinners.

But our God *in the midst of Wrath remembers Mercy, in him Compassions flow* : For from the 60 Verse, we have gracious Promises of Mercy that should gloriously exalt it self, even towards them, when God would remember his Covenant made with them

them in their Youth ; and though they had proved so forgetful of their Vows and Engagements, and therefore had no Claim to any Favour by their Covenant, yet he would at length, in the Days of the *Messiah*, restore them to his Friendship, and unite them with their *Sisters*, elder and younger, to himself, by an *everlasting Covenant* ; his Part whereof he would keep inviolable, and also engage them, by the Power of his Grace, to be steady and faithful in the Performance of theirs.

Your Time will not allow me to explain these *Verses* particularly, or to consider the special Circumstances of the *Jews*, from which many useful Instructions might be afforded to us, suitable to our Case ; for I am afraid, that as God has loaded us with his Benefits, and exercised the utmost Long-suffering and Patience towards us, so we have too closely imitated them in the Height of their Ingratitude and Disobedience : I design therefore to discourse to you a little from the Text, as it respects in general the Influence which renewed Offers of Mercy and Grace ought to have upon Persons, who have been guilty of gross Impieties, and particularly the abusing and despising the Riches of former Goodness and Forbearance exercised towards them, *that they may remember and be confounded, and never open their Mouth any more because of their Shame.*

In which Words we may take notice of these Things following.

1. We have a very just though odious Character given of Rebellion against God, *thy Shame*. Sinning, especially when against such a Multitude of Mercies, is the greatest Reproach and Disgrace that can possibly be put upon a Soul ; it is the vilest

and basest Action, and attended with the utmost Dishonour and Contempt : Hence we find in Scripture it gets the most infamous Names, *Blindness* and *Folly*, *the Vomit of a Dog*, and *the Wallowing of a Sow in the Mire* ; and when the Vileness of Sin shall be fully laid open by the great Judge, then it will be past Dispute, that such as boast themselves of Iniquity, *glory in their Shame*.

2dly. We have a glorious Effect of the inexhaustible Riches of divine Mercy and Patience, in not only delaying the immediate covering Sinners with eternal Shame and Contempt, but in the offering them Reconciliation with himself, and a Place in the Favour and Friendship of that God to whose past Kindnesses they had made such undutiful Returns : This is insinuated in our Text, *when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done* ; and directly asserted in the preceeding Verse, *And I will establish my Covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord*.

3dly. We have God's Design in this gracious Conduct towards Sinners, and the Influence it ought to have upon them.

1. It should engage them to *remember* their Treachery in his Covenant, and the numerous Sins they have been guilty of against so good a God. A just Sense of the Grace of God in passing over our Iniquities, will put us upon a diligent Search into our secret Errors, and the aggravating Circumstances of our Disobedience ; that, from a fixed Impression of their Number and Greatness we may have the more admiring Thoughts of that Love and Mercy which triumpheth over them, and the lower Opinion of our selves : Hence in the 20 Chapter of this Prophecy, 43 Verse, it is said of *Israel* when

when God should restore them to their own Land, that there they should remember their Ways, and their Doings, wherein they have been defiled, and lothe themselves in their own Sight, for all their Evils that they had committed.

2. We have the Effect this Remembrance ought to produce, to confound and stop the Mouth of the Sinner. The Soul that sees how shameful an Evil it is to depart from the Fountain of living Waters, and abuse the Goodness of so merciful a Father and Friend, will be amazed at it self, and filled with Astonishment, that ever God should have brought up Children, and yet they have so ungratefully rebelled against him. And a deep Sense of the monstrous Intamy and Debasedness hereof, will affect him with the lowest Humiliation; he will not go about to palliate his Crimes, but the Thoughts of his inconceivable Vileness will fill the Soul, and banish away every Cloke and Excuse: He will never again open his Mouth against the divine Management, but silently submit to his Providence; he owns the Justice of his Judgment, should he banish him to Hell; and adores his Goodness, in the most uneasy Circumstances he can be placed in while upon this Earth.

It not being possible for me to touch at all the important Truths contained in these Words, I shall endeavour to comprehend what may be most useful for our present Meditation in the following Things.

1. I shall prove, in several Instances, that departing from our God, and disobeying his Laws, is the greatest Reproach, Shame and Disgrace to the Sinner.

2dly. I shall offer some Considerations to our Thoughts, the meditating upon which will tend to give us the deeper Impressions of the exceeding

Shamefulness of Sin, and to perswade us, when we remember our Iniquities, to be *confounded and never to open our Mouth any more.*

3dly. I shall endeavour to lay before you the Force of God's proposing the Sinner's being thus *confounded*, as the Design of his again *establisshing his Covenant*, and being *pacified towards us*, by shewing the great Influence that such a Temper of Mind hath upon the Performance of the Duties God calls for from us, particularly such as are in a special Manner incumbent on us, when we are about to renew our Engagements to be the Lord's.

4thly. I shall draw a few practical Inferences from the preceeding Discourse.

1. I shall prove that departing from our God and disobeying his Laws is the greatest Reproach, Shame and Disgrace of the Sinner.

1. The exceeding Shamefulness of Sin will appear, if we consider the infinite Folly and Madness of it, and how severe a Reproach it is to our Understandings. A Fool is reputed the most ignominious Character amongst Men, and the Imputation of it generally raiseth the deepest Blush : Now it is the *Fool only who saith in his Heart that there is no God*, or ever breaks his holy Commandments ; for what Madness can be so extravagant, as the throwing our selves out of the Favour of the great King of the World, whose Friendship can alone make us happy and safe, whose kind Providence is the only Guard from Danger and Death, and alone is able to elevate the Soul above the Reach of the Storms and Tempests which rage in so troublesom unsettled an Ocean as this World is, and can also pursue us with Vengeance beyond Death and the Grave ; to be an Enemy to whom, is to arm infinite

nite Fury and irresistible Power against a weak contemptible Creature, *that is crushed before the Moth?* Surely he is not half so foolish, who would strive to overturn a Rock by dashing his Head against it, as he who *runs upon the Buckler of the Almighty.*

But further, would we not believe it foolish and extravagant, for a Person to prefer the amusing himself with childish Toys to the more manly and rational Enjoyments of Life? And, I am sure, he is not wiser who placeth his chiefest Happiness in sinful Pleasures, and neglects the nobler Delights of a spiritual State. What an Affront is it to our Reason, to vex and disquiet our selves in pursuing Wind and Vanity, to cheat our Souls with an empty Shew, or rather to sport with Poison and Death, and to prefer a few Moments Enjoyment of debased Pleasure to the Power of an eternal Life, and the Overflow of immortal Joys? How easily then is the Question answered, *Psal. xiv. 4. Have all the Workers of Iniquity no Knowledge?* Surely it may be said of every one of them what God speaks concerning backsliding *Israel, Deut. xxxii. 28. They are a Nation void of Counsel, neither is there any Understanding in them.*

But further the Reproach and Shamefulness of our Folly in sinning, is exceedingly heightened from the Means of Knowledge we have. It is not such a Scandal for one that never enjoyed Opportunities of learning to be found ignorant: But for a Person that has had all the Advantages of a happy Education to be so, is justly esteemed a Disgrace. How shameful must our Folly then be, who refuse to be instructed, though we have so noble a Prophet as the Son of God to teach us, and enjoy so bright a Revelation? How excusable soever Er-

For and Vice may be in those who want our Knowledge and Means of attaining to it, it must be the highest Infamy for us to be ignorant and blind, to sleep even as others, or neglect the being watchful and sober, seeing we are the Children of the Light and the Children of the Day, and that we are not of Night or of Darkness. If therefore there be any Shame in Folly of the most fatal Consequence; and in Blindness in the clearest Sun-shine, and with the best Opportunities of knowing: It must be the highest Reproach for us to be Sinners.

2dly. The Shamefulness of Sin appears, from a Consideration of the Slavery and Bondage it brings the Soul under of the most dishonourable Kind. He that abandons God, at the same Time throws away his Freedom, and hath no more Claim to a rational Liberty: He becomes the Servant of Sin, and is led captive at its Pleasure by every pitiful Lust and Passion. How inglorious is it for an immortal Spirit, and how far do we stoop below the Dignity and Excellency of our Natures, to follow the Beck and Nod of every sensual Pleasure against our Honour and Interest, and not to be able to resist their Importunity, or knock off the Chains which are put upon us by the least of a thousand unruly Appetites? It is not so disgraceful for a Prince, to be governed by the wild Humour and Fancy of a foolish Favourite, as for a Man to ly down under the Dominion and uncontrouled Influence of every Temptation that comes in his Way, as if it had a Title to be his Master, and to subject his Soul and its Happiness to the Government of his Sense. How mean abjected a Slavery, how proud, scornful and assuming are these tyrannical Lords, which, did we act as Men and much more as Christians, ought to

to be kept in Subjection as the lowest of our Servants? Certainly it must be a most shameful Cowardice, and inglorious Degeneracy of Spirit, for us to sit quietly still, without trying to shake off the Yoke and assert our Liberty. Would we but seriously think upon our own State, and remember how oft a little contemptible Pleasure or Passion has insultingly domineered over our Reason, and dragged us after it against our true Honour, our eternal Interest, and our own Resolutions to the contrary, even while Christ Jesus the Redeemer offered to make us free, what *Shame and Confusion must cover us?*

3dly. It will appear that Sin is our Shame if we consider the base Injustice of it. A Person of any Reputation would readily blush and be confounded, if he were caught stealing from his Neighbour, or had a fraudulent Design discovered of tricking him out of his Estate: Now God has an infinitely surer Title to our highest Love and Service, than it is possible a Man can have to any Thing he possesseth; the Word of his Power called us out of nothing, and every Moment of our Continuance in Being depends upon him, he preserves us by his mighty Providence, and all that we have or are flows from his Bounty, the Faculties of our Soul and the Members of our Body are intirely his: So that it is justly the Heavens and Earth stand amazed, that we should not give our Maker the Tribute of Praise, and that we refuse to serve him with his own. The most scandalous and meanest Trick of Injustice amongst Men is honourable, when compared with the Shame of our refusing to render God the Fruit of the Vineyard which he planted with his own Hand. How ought we to
T 4 blush,

blush, when we consider, that *though the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib*; yet our God has Ground to complain, that *Israel doth not know, and that his People doth not consider.*

4thly. The Shamefulness of departing from God and disobeying his Laws, appears from the Consideration of the horrid Ingratitude of the Sinner. Amongst Men there can be no higher Reproach than to be thought ungrateful: He that forgets the Kindness of a Friend, and is not moved by Goodness, is justly accounted a Monster, and utterly void of the least Seeds of Honour and Generosity. How base and abandoned must Sinners then be, whose hard and stupid Hearts are not melted or softened by the unbounded Goodness and Grace of our merciful God? He made us at first but a little lower than the Angels who *excel in Strength*, and crowned us with Glory and Honour, he beautified us with the Ornaments of Innocence, and was himself our chiefest Joy; when we came out from our Maker's Hands, there was no Deformity or Seed of Disease and Decay in our Bodies, nor the smallest Blemish in the Soul, no Clouds hung over our Understanding, nor any rebellious Passions raged in our Breasts, he gave us a Conscience that enjoyed the serenest Calm, we had no Enemy to fear, all the Host of Heaven were our Friends, and we were Lords over every Thing else that we had to do with. These are some of the Tests of his original Bounty, and when we wilfully threw away this Crown, as if we had scorned the divine Goodness, and so forfeited all Title to his Favour, and were exposed to his Wrath, he in Mercy forgave our Folly, and amazed Heaven itself by a Mystery of Love to miserable Sinners:

God

and confounded because of Sin. 297

God was manifested in the Flesh, he bore our Grievs, was acquainted with all our Infirmities, and suffered the Punishment of our Transgressions in his own Body upon the Cross. . Monstrous Ingratitude! to rebel against so good a God and merciful a Father, to sin against so astonishing Love, and reject and affront such a Saviour; for us who name the Name of this glorious Redeemer, and know what he did and suffered for us, to joyn with his Enemies, and crucify him every Moment afresh by cleaving to our Sins. Surely every Grone of our Saviour, and each Drop of Blood he sweated when the Father laid our Iniquities upon him, may raise a Blush in the Soul of a Sinner or a cold languishing Christian: And the finishing Part, his Death upon the Cross, may cover with Confusion and Shame the smallest Degree of Confidence and Vanity, make us confounded and never open our Mouth any more since even yet he is pacified towards us.

The *second* Head I proposed was to offer some Considerations, the meditating upon which tends to give us the deeper Impressions of the exceeding Shamefulness of Sin, and to perswade us, when we remember our Iniquities, to be confounded and never to open our Mouth any more. And tho' this be much the same with the former Head, yet I chuse to propose them distinctly, because what I am now to say will serve also for Directions, in order to our attaining this Frame of Spirit recommended in the Text.

1. Let us cast up our Eyes to Heaven, and take a View of the pure unwearied Services that are there paid to our God. The Angels sing his Praises and faint not to Eternity, they are all on Fire with divine Love which never cools or decays,

cays, and are swift as the Wind to execute the Pleasure of their King, and steadier than the firmest Mountain in persevering Obedience to his Commandments. How may we blush, not only at our grosser Crimes; but even when we compare with their Services our highest Acts of Love and most raised Devotions? even when sitting at our Redeemer's Table, ours are languishing and heavy, and at the best make but a slow Flight to Heaven; and yet we are under as great Obligations to God as they, and are more nearly concerned in the Love of the *Messiah*. Should a Company of these heavenly Hosts come into our Assemblies, and in their elevated Strains sing the Glory and Grace of redeeming Love, and the Peace thereby bestowed upon Men, how would those look us out of Countenance, that have so cold Affections, and a Heart so little inspired with Gratitude, though we have far more peculiar Reasons to praise and adore the Redeemer than they, whose Nature he did not take upon him, and whose Sins he never expiated?

Ought we not to blush, even for the Defects of our Services, when we consider that the Angels and we are under the same Head Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and in Earth is named, Eph. iii. 15. And the Angel tells *John*, that he is his *Fellow-servant*: But ah! how vastly do they outrun us? In one Moment they go farther in Obedience to God than we are able during our whole Lives. And are they and we of the same Family, and Fellow-servants, what Confusion may cover our Faces, not only when we lift up our Eyes to God, but when we look at the Cherub and Seraph, and compare their burning Zeal and eter-

eternal Activity with our Laziness and Indifferency in the Service of our common Lord? Let us then, for Shame, lament our Weariness and weak Love, and by vehement Desires and constant Endeavours aspire unto Heaven, that there we may run in a more equal Pace with these our Fellow-servants, and with as loud Songs, and as vigorous a Love as theirs, unwearied sing, *Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb.*

2dly. In order to impress us with a deep Sense of the Shamefulness of Sin, at least in us who profess to be Christians, and resolve to name that holy Name; and how disgraceful it is in us, to be Slaves to the Devil, or ever to comply with the least of his Commands: Consider the Relation we hope one Day to stand in to those infernal Spirits, *Know ye not, saith the Apostle, I. Cor. vi. 3: that we shall judge Angels?* And are Christians to sit with their exalted Saviour in pronouncing the final Sentence upon Devils and wicked Men; then how infamous must it be for us to suffer them now ever to lord it over us? Do we hope to exercise Dominion over them in the Morning of the Resurrection, and shall we now truckle to their Pleasure, we who are joyned to a Head that has laid them conquered at his Feet, and will at length banish them into everlasting Darkness? We would abhor the Thoughts of ever admitting the Devil or any of his Works to the smallest Degree of our Fellowship, or abide their Company, and be ashamed and confounded that we have done it so much: If we considered the Dignity of a Christian, and the Debasedness of a Devil. What a Reproach is the least Service that can be done to these apostate Spirits, by those who hope they shall

shall be crowned with Glory and Honour, while these shall come trembling before them to receive their Sentence?

3dly. For this Purpose consider the End of a Christian's Course, *a Kingdom wherein dwelleth Righteousness and Peace.* Must it not be shameful and the greatest Reproach, for a Person who hopes one Day to swim in *these Rivers of Pleasures that are at God's right Hand*, and to spend an eternal Life in the Midst of that *Fulness of Joy which is in his Presence*, to be captivated with the trifling Allurements of Sin and Sense, which are so infinitely below our Pursuit? It was not so indecent and mean, for the Emperor of *Rome* publicly to play the Fiddler and glory in it, though all Men thought that an unbecoming Employment of Heroes, a Disgrace to his Character, and shameful to himself; as it is for a Christian, who pretends to have his Treasure in Heaven, and the Prospect of being ever with the Lord, to consume one Moment's Time upon the highest Enjoyments which Satan and Sin can offer. How base and sordid is it, for one that has such elevated Views, and looks at so noble a Reward, to puddle in the Mire of Sin and Sense, and be busied with such childish Toys? For him that is under the Power of an immortal Life, to be fond of perishing Vanities, which are suitable only to the Beasts that perish with them? May not we blush and be confounded when ever we look up to that Object of our Hopes, these ravishing Joys that without Interruption spread themselves from the Throne of God; when we stoop so far below them, and debase ourselves in giving any Share of our Esteem and Love to this present World?

Lastly,

Lastly. Let us meditate upon our Character, and the Engagements we are under to Jesus Christ. We have sworn to be his faithful Soldiers, to fight against Sin his greatest Enemy, and never to depart from his holy Commandments: Now what can be more shameful than for a Soldier to betray his General, and run over to the Enemy? Or, if we go not that length, openly to apostatize from him? How inglorious is it for a Soldier to be faint and cowardly, and to surrender a Prisoner, when, had he had Courage, he would have conquered? We ought to be filled with Confusion when we consider the Captain under whom we fight, he does not push us upon Danger and Death, and in the mean Time indulge his own Ease, or shun the Combate: No, in his own Person he hath acted and suffered infinitely more than all his Followers; he with undaunted Courage encountred all the Legions of Darkness, and fainted not nor gave back when surrounded by Enemies, the united Malice and Power of Devils and wicked Men did not shake his Constancy; but he gloriously endured the Cross and despised the Shame; and, though he looked and there was none to help, and wondered that there was none to uphold, yet his own Arm brought Salvation, he trode the Wine-press alone, and of the People there were none with him. How shameful and dishonourable must it be to desert such a General, and be faint and timorous when we have so noble an Example to animate us? Can we ever again look him in the Face without blushing? or approach his Table to renew our Vows, and mix our selves with the Armies of Israel, without Confusion of Face for our treacherous Backsliding? Did the Captain of our Salvation put us upon storming
these

these strong Holds which Sin hath erected in our Hearts, before there was a wide enough Breach made in them? Did he command us, upon no better a Support than the Strength of our own natural Powers, to oppose prevailing Corruptions, we might have some Excuse for yielding to so terrible an Enemy: But when by his Death he *spoiled Principalities and Powers*, trode Satan and our Lusts under his Feet, resisted all the Efforts of the Devil when he himself was tempted by him, and by his victorious Grace hath enabled Thousands of his Followers to be more than Conquerors, how inglorious must it be for us to submit to a baffled Enemy, and run away from broken scattered Foes, when we have nothing to do but to *resist the Devil and he will flee from us*? And to yield to the first Attack of a Temptation, argues the greatest Treachery or Cowardice, and must needs be our Shame.

Thus I have in some Measure shewn the Shamefulness of Sin, and offered some proper Subjects of our Meditation, in order to perswade Sinners to be *ashamed and confounded, and never to open their Mouth any more.*

The *third* Thing I proposed, was to open up the Force of God's proposing the Sinner's being ashamed of Sin, as the Design of his *establishting his Covenant*, and being *pacified towards us*, by shewing you the powerful Influence, this Temper of Soul hath upon a right Performance of all the Duties God requires of true Penitents: But, because I have already spent too much of your Time, I shall only very shortly instance this in these three Graces, which are peculiarly to be exercised when we partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,
and

and when there God is offering to be *pacified towards us.*

1. It is our special Duty, upon that solemn Occasion, to have the most raised and admiring Thoughts of the inconceivable Love of God and Jesus Christ, and of the inexhaustible Riches and Freedom of his Mercy in the Mystery of Man's Redemption: The giving him the Glory of these Perfections, is the great Tribute of Praise he then requires of us. Now nothing will more heighten our Sense and Acknowledgments of the Grace of God, than Shame and Confusion of Face because of Sin: The blushing Sinner hath the lowest Thoughts of himself, and is filled with Surprise and Love that ever God should look on so debased, vile, ungrateful a Creature; he is amazed at his own Shame, and at the Freedom of Grace in covering it; and, the more he is confounded because of his Iniquities, the more he exalts and admires, with ravishing Thoughts, the Goodness of a God he hath so shamefully departed from.

2dly. A Sense of the Shamefulness of Sin, and Confusion because of it, hath a mighty Influence upon a lively Faith in Christ Jesus the Saviour, a hearty embracing him for our Prophet, Priest and King, and *a making mention of his Righteousness and his only.* It is the impudent Sinner alone who dreams of Merit, and of a Righteousness of his own: This is very lively exemplified in the *Pharisee*, he was not confounded because of Sin, he had little Sense of his own Guilt or the Shamefulness of it, and therefore he presumptuously boasted of his Performances; whereas the poor *Publican* who was *ashamed to lift up his Eyes to Heaven*, threw himself intirely upon the Mercy of God

God to Sinners, without a Thought of another Remedy.

Lastly. Self-denial, a taking up the Redeemer's Cross, and a quiet submitting to all the Tribulations we may meet with in the Way to the Kingdom, is an eminent Grace, and ought to be very vigorous and active when we commemorate the Death of our Saviour. Now, Shame and Confusion because of Sin, hath a very plain Influence upon the suitable Exercise of this Grace. It had this Effect upon Job, *Behold, I am vile, says he, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my Hand upon my Mouth, I abhor my self, and repent in Dust and Asbes.* This Temper of Spirit will dispose us to believe that God can never deal too hardly with us, or punish us more than our Iniquities deserve; and it will engage us cheerfully to *bear the Indignation of the Lord because we have sinned.*

I might insist, in many Instances, upon this Subject; but, because this Discourse hath been already drawn out to a great enough Length, I shall conclude it with this one Inference from what hath been said.

Is Sin so shameful and so dishonourable, and the Reproach and Disgrace of it peculiarly aggravated in Christians; and is Confusion of Face because of it so necessary to a right Performance of our Duties, and especially our sacramental ones: Then let all of us endeavour to remember our Iniquities this Day, to search into the Number and Vileness of them; and to twit and upbraid our selves, for our Ingratitude to our God and Redeemer, for the Coolness of our languishing Love and the undutiful Returns we have made to his Mercies, for the many Breaches of our baptismal and sacramental Vows,

Vows, and for our numerous Sins, every one of them loaded with a betrayed Saviour and the vilest Perjury. And let us not content our selves with a transient slight Enquiry into these Things, but meditate so particularly, and with such Earnestness upon them, till our Souls be covered with Shame and Confusion because of them, that we may be *confounded*, and never open our Mouth any more because of our Shame.

And let us mind to forsake Sin whereof we are ashamed. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, *I have born Chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach thou me: If I have done Iniquity I will do no more.*

I shall conclude this Discourse by reading to you the 10, 11 and 12 Verses of the 43 Chapter of Ezekiel, which shews us what ought to be our Improvement of a Sense of the Shamefulness of Sin. *Thou Son of Man, shew the House to the House of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their Iniquities, and let them measure the Pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the Form of the House, and the Fashion thereof, and the Goings out thereof, and the Comings in thereof, and all the Forms thereof, and all the Ordinances thereof, and all the Forms thereof, and all the Laws thereof: And write it in their Sight, that they may keep the whole Form thereof, and all the Ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the Law of the House; upon the Top of the Mountain, the whole Limit thereof round about shall be most holy: Behold, this is the Law of the House.*





S E R M O N XIII.

HEB. xii. 1, 2. *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us: Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God.*



TRUE Religion is in its own Nature so contrary to the corrupt Inclinations of apostate Mankind, which carry them to the Paths of Iniquity, that it must be extremely hard to persuade Persons, so deep plunged into the Mire of Sin and Sense, to forsake their wick-

wicked Ways, and enter upon those of the divine Life : And after this Race is fairly begun, there are innumerable Difficulties to be surmounted, and many Dangers to be looked in the Face, before we can attain to the End of it. The Way it self is strait and narrow, and hath no Room for our loose Desires to play the wanton, or for Sloth and Laziness to ly down and indulge themselves : While there is a broad Way, which, by its deceitful Allurements, invites the unwary Traveller to turn aside into its Ease and Pleasures. We have a Heart within that is not easily fixed, or animated with Vigour in the working out of its Salvation : And a cunning malicious Adversary, the Devil, who is skilful to destroy, and knows the Arts both of enticing with Flatteries, and frightening with Threats. And these Weights are so heavy upon us, while we try to run the Christian Race, and so many Sins easily beset us, that the Consideration hereof cannot but prove a great Damp to our Thoughts, and might justly make us despair of ever enduring to the End of this Race, and attaining to the Prize, that glorious Reward which will crown the Head of the persevering Conqueror : If we had not, blessed be God, as great Encouragements to Vigour and Cheerfulness, as we have Arguments to Faint-heartedness and Despondency ; as steady and powerful Helps to support us, as we have Dangers to frighten, or Enemies to throw us down in this Race ; and no more Difficulties to encounter, than we have Assistances to bear us out, without any Fear of their failing us and proving deceitful ; in a Word, as excellent and enlivening Hopes, as we have distracting Fears ; since we are not only encompassed about with so great

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a Cloud of Witnesses, but have Jesus to look to who is
the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

I shall at this Time, by the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, speak a little to both these, I shall touch at the great Difficulties and Discouragements which true Religion is accompanied by, and shew that, notwithstanding thereof, there are very powerful Arguments to quicken and bear us up in the unwearied Practice of it, and that we have no Reason to faint in our Minds, from a Consideration of the noble Encouragement proposed by the Apostle in our Text: That so we may, at the same Time, be awakned into Care and Diligence, by a View of the Hardships and Dangers we may lay our Account with in this Race which the Gospel sets before us, and yet be preserved from sinking under the Apprehensions of them, but may be animated, with unshaken Resolution and Courage, never to give over till we overcome, and to pass through Death and Danger, rather than yield the Victory to the Enemies of our Souls and fall short of the Mark.

The inspired Penman of this excellent Portion of Scripture, having at considerable Length vindicated the Truth and Beauty of Christianity, and the Glory of its Author, from the false Notions which the blinded *Jews* entertained of it, and demonstrated, from their own Doctrine and Institutions, that the *Mosaick* Oeconomy was not designed to have an unalterable Obligation, but plainly pointed forth its own End, and that it was at length to give place to better Ordinances, and that their *Law of a carnal Commandment*, it self, recommended to their Faith and Obedience the Power of an eternal Life, which it ushered in
and

and prepared the Way to: He, in the two or three last *Chapters* of this *Epistle*, applies himself more immediately towards the directing and influencing the Practice of serious Christianity, and the diligent Performance of the several Duties incumbent upon the Professors thereof.

In the former *Chapter*, he particularly insists upon and illustrates the great Power and Efficacy of Faith, and lays before us the admirable Influence it had upon the Lives of the holy Patriarchs, and the succeeding Heroes of the true Religion, who thereby became so bright Examples of Holiness and Stedfastness in the Ways of God; of a generous Contempt of the World and all its flattering Vanities and Desires, which breathed after a better *Country*, that is, an heavenly; and of an exalted Spirit that was not moved by Shame and Ignominy, nor conquered by Persecution, Imprisonment and all the Torments of the cruellest Barbarity. In the *Verses* which I have read, he draws the Inference from the foregoing Account, *namely*, that we ought to be engaged thereby to imitate their Example: And then sets before us that which was incomparably a stronger Motive, and the greatest Encouragement in Christianity, the Consideration of *Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith*.

In the Text we may shortly take notice of these Things.

1. We have therein a Character of a true Christian, and his Work described to us, *running the Race that is set before him*. There is in the *Verse* a plain Allusion to the so much celebrated *Olympick Games* amongst the *Greeks*, where there were several Exercises, in which the eager Candidates employed all their Power and Skill to excel their Ri-

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vals, and gain the Victory with the distinguishing Honour that upon such Occasions crowned the Conqueror: And to all these the Life of a Christian is compared in holy Scripture, to point out its Activity and Vigour, the great Opposition and numerous Difficulties which those who engaged in it were to lay their Account with; together with their Resolution and Courage to exert themselves to the utmost, and never give over till they had overcome them. Here a Race is particularly mentioned, in managing which to Advantage both Strength and Diligence are necessary. At these Exercises amongst the *Greeks* there was a Judge who ordered the Games, set the Laws to the Contenders whereby they were to govern themselves, and then adjudged the Crown to the Conqueror: To whom Christ is here compared; and to this, the Christian Race's being said to be *set before us* seems to have a Reference, *namely*, it is that Life, and these Exercises of it, which are laid down to us by the Laws and declared Will of the great Judge Christ, who sets before us our Duty, and by his Authority determines it. And as the whole of our evangelical Obedience is thus compared to a Race, so our Performance of it is frequently held forth in Scripture by our *running*: Thus, says the Psalmist, *Psal. cxix. 32. I will run the Way of thy Commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my Heart*: And *Phil. ii. 16. Holding forth the Word of Life, saith Paul, that I may rejoyce in the Day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

2dly. In the Text there is a Qualification of this our running, *namely*, *Patience*: That we endure to the End without fretting at its Length, or repining

pinning at the numerous Difficulties thereof. But of this I may have Occasion to speak afterwards.

3dly. We have an Argument to engage us to the Performance of what is here recommended by the Apostle, brought in by way of Inference from the numerous Catalogue of Contenders this way, who had done valiantly and continued with Perseverance: *Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of Witnesses.* At the Olympick Games there were Persons appointed to stand at the Mark, to observe who came first thither, and accordingly gave Evidence as to the Conqueror upon whom the Crown was to be bestowed; and such were called *Witnesses*: And beside them, all the Crowd of Spectators, which on such Occasions used to be very numerous, and thronged on every side, got this Name. And in Allusion hereto, these illustrious Examples of Faith and Patience celebrated in the preceeding Chapter, who had now got to the End of their Race, are represented as Witnesses of their Successors in that Course, by their Presence to animate the Contenders and quicken them, that by their Applauses they might hold out and not be faint or discouraged. A great Number, a Throng, is ordinarily represented in different Authors by a *Cloud*, which consists of an innumerable Multitude of Vapours: Thus, to mention no other Instance, *Isaiah* prophesying Chap. lx. of the great Crowd of Converts to the Gospel-church, cries out, *Ver. 8. Who are these that flee as a Cloud, and as the Doves to their Windows?* And thus these noble Witnesses to our Behaviour in the Christian Race, *encompass us round about*, and we can look no where in it, but they are straight

312 *We must run the Race set before us,*
in our View, and call upon us to make vigorous
Advances towards the Mark.

4thly. We have a necessary Mean of running so
as to gain the Prize, and follow these eminent Ex-
amples, *laying aside every Weight, and the Sin which*
doth so easily beset us. It was ordinary for the Con-
tenders in the Olympick Games, diligently to pre-
pare themselves beforehand, and, in particular,
carefully to rid themselves of every weighty Thing
which might be a Hindrance to them, and to
render themselves as agile and light as might
be: So that they usually threw off their very
Garments, that they might be no ways incumbered
in their running. And agreeably hereto, Christi-
ans are commanded to *lay aside every Weight* that
could prove a Clog to heavenly Desires, and a
Burden to the Soul when it was moving from the
Earth towards a better Country, and that had a
Tendency to weigh us down to this World, or
weaken our Strength and Resolution in vigorous
Advances to the Mark, *namely,* a Perfection of
Holiness and Bliss in the Salvation of our Souls:
Such as all earthly Mindedness and a Love of its
Pleasures, debased Affections which are enamoured
with the fading Charms of temporal Vanities, and
the Pursuits of Riches, Honours or Delights, which
have their Habitation here below.

The Sin that easily besets us, may either be under-
stood, as it is in our Translation, in an active
Sense, *namely,* that which, though not very bur-
densom, yet, might prove entangling to a Runner;
as light Garments sometimes do when moved and
blown about by the Wind: And so hereby may
be designed any of these many flattering Vanities
which the Devil may throw in our Way, and
where-

whereby our Desires may be a little touched and inflamed, and consequently our Vigour abated in running; as also these Fears of Persecution or Contempt, which sometimes come across the Christian Course, and, meeting with any Thing of a low cowardly Disposition, give a mighty Shock to their Stedfastness and Perseverance. Or this Phrase*, which never occurs in the New Testament but in this Place, may be also taken in a passive Sense: The Privative of the Greek Word †, in some Authors, expresses a Thing without Circumstances, bare of any Ornaments, and which hath no Arguments to support it; and consequently the Word as it lies in our Text, upon the contrary, denotes a Sin which is painted over with fair Colours, and attended with enticing Pretences, and whose Circumstances are so plausible and goodly as to insinuate and ingratiate themselves into our Affections, *a Sin well circumstanced* ‡, so the original Word literally signifies. And in both these Senses, what are ordinarily named our predominant Sins, seems to be designed, *namely*, such as in their own Nature and Suitableness to our Temper and Inclinations, have the greatest Influence over us, and make the most dangerous Attack upon our Souls: And consequently it ought to be our Care to guard that Quarter most diligently and labour with the greatest Earnestness to mortifie such endeared Affections, and bring them under the Obedience of Christ.

Lastly. In these Words we have, of all others, the most perswasive Argument to Vigour in *running the Race set before us*: The noblest and surest Support to which we must chiefly trust, and the all-suffi-

* *ἐνπερίσας*, † *ἀπερίσας*, ‡ *ἀμαρτίαν ἐνπερίσας*.

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sufficient Help upon which alone we safely rely,
and the View whereof is indeed enough to raise
our drooping Spirits, and quicken our languishing
faint Endeavours, *namely, the Consideration of*
Jesus who is the Author of our Faith. Faith here
seems not to be restricted to that noble Grace
which is distinguished by that Name, though it
may be peculiarly referred to; but it may include
all that Obedience, and these Duties which are
comprehended in our running the Christian Race,
together with the Prize which the Conqueror shall
at last be possessed of, *the End of our Faith, the Sal-*
vation of our Souls: And of all this Jesus is the
Author, he by his Death and Obedience procured
this Grace and purchased our Happiness, he brought
in the everlasting Righteousness which is all our Hope,
and *finished Transgression.* And it is *this great Apostle*
of our Profession, who proclaims the Doctrine of
Faith, and engages us to hear and obey it: It
was he that paved the Way, by running alongst
which we may gain the Prize; he set up the Mark
at the End of it, and hung thereupon the Crown
for the Conqueror.

And he is also *the Finisher of our Faith,* who, as he
begins the good Work, carries it on to Perfection, it
is he who spirits us up in our Race when oppres-
sed with the numerous Difficulties of the Way, and
the Weights which cleave to us; animates our Faint-
ness with unwearied Resolution; and enables us to
defeat any rival Lusts and Passions, which strive to
outrun Grace and Holiness, and get more Interest
in our Hearts than they; and, as he did of old by
the *Egyptians,* he takes off the Chariot-wheels of
our Enemies that they move slowly. In a Word,
he enlivens us till we come to the End of our Race,
and

and then declares us Conquerors, and with his own Hand crowns our Heads with the beautiful Diadem he purchased for us by his Blood. Upon this Jesus we are exhorted to look, to consider and depend upon him as our chief Hope, Support and Expectation. And this glorious Example is proposed to us particularly in his Courage and unmoved Stedfastness, which no Terrors of Death or Danger could in the least make him shrink from: But, with a superior Spirit, he not only was not worsted by them, or overturned in his running; but he patiently *endured and despised*, as mean and inconsiderable, all the Variety of Difficulties and Sufferings whereby he was assaulted. And you know Pain and Contempt, *the Cross and the Shame*, are the chief Aversion of our Nature, and the great Constituents of our Miseries: And both these, in their highest Degrees, persecuted and affronted him through the whole of his Life, and peculiarly in his Death, after which, being exalted above the Toil and Labour of running, he is for ever *set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God!*

We have also, and I shall add nothing further upon the Explication, the Ground of this heroick Management of our Redeemer's, the Argument which moved him and kept Life in his Resolution and Perseverance, *for the Joy that was set before him*. The most obvious and literal Meaning hereof, is that glorious Exaltation of his Person in Heaven, where he was for ever to reign the Head of the Redeemed, and to have the submissive Bow of every Knee in Heaven and in Earth. And this seems to be confirmed from what he is brought in as speaking himself, *Psalm xvi.* where it is said that, during his most grievous Sufferings, *his Heart was glad, and his*

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Flesh did rest in Hope; the Reason whereof, and the
Argument which supported him so steady and in-
vincibly curagious, is given us in the last Verse.
Thou wilt shew me the Path of Life, in thy Presence is Ful-
ness of Joy, at thy right Hand there are Pleasures for e-
vermore : This was the Joy set before him. Others
 think that the eternal Glory of God in the Salva-
 tion of the Church, and the Accomplishment of all
 the Counsels of divine Wisdom and Grace, was the
 Joy here set before him : For this was the chief
 Thing which our Lord had in his Eye, and it ani-
 mated him in all his Labours. But, though the
 first Exposition seems to be as directly intended in
 this Place, yet there is no Occasion of separating
 them ; since the brightest Ornament of the Maje-
 sty of the exalted Saviour's Throne in Heaven, will
 be the Glory of the amiable Excellencies of God,
 which shine with so beautiful a Lustre in his Face.
 And the Satisfaction he shall take in the Honour
 of his Father ; arising from the Salvation of Sinners,
 of which he was the Captain, will be the most ra-
 vishing part in his Reward ; and this will make
 his Soul rejoyce to Eternity, that he can say to the
 Father, as it is *Heb. ii. 13. Behold, I, and the Children*
which God hath given me.

You see the Words which I have explained con-
 tain a Variety of Subjects which might be usefully
 spoke to, and afford Matter for several Discourses.
 I shall only at this Time touch at a few of the
 more general Purposes contained in these Words,
 and shortly do these three Things.

1. I shall observe two or three general Truths
 from them ; chiefly concerning the laborious Na-
 ture and Difficulties of the Christian Religion. 2.
 I shall shew that notwithstanding of these, and the
 nu-

numerous Discouragements we may meet with in the Paths of the divine Life, that we have no Reason to be weary or faint in our Minds ; but to persevere in running vigorously this Race till we come to the End of our Course, from this Consideration, that we have *Jesus to look to as the Author and Finisher of our Faith.* 3. I shall draw a practical Inference or two from what may be said.

I begin with the first of these, *namely*, to observe two or three general Truths from the Text. And,

In the *first* Place we may hence see that Christianity is far from being a slothful Religion, or allowing any Indulgence in a lazy Inactivity : But, on the contrary, requires the utmost Diligence and Application, a vigorous exercising every Faculty of our Spirit and Member of our Body in the Ways of Righteousness. However fond Men may be of deceiving themselves, the Doctrine of the Gospel does not flatter them with the Prospect of an inglorious Ease, or even an ordinary Labour and Toil: *Yet a little Sleep, yet a little Slumber*, is not to be expected by any who heartily embrace it ; but they must resolve to watch and work, to be constantly employed, and that with all their Force and Power, in the Labours of their Profession, for this World is the very Field of Battle where we ought constantly to be busied in the Fight, till no Enemy appear, but every one of them be slain. In Heaven we may promise our Souls an eternal Sabbath of Rest, where the Sweets of Enjoyment, and the Glory of a Triumph, take the Place which here is possessed by toilsom Endeavours and a fatiguing War : But if we now trifle away the proper Season in an inactive Campaign, we are

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none of Christ's Soldiers, or behave unworthy of
our General.

Hence you see, in our Text, Religion is compared to a Race, where a Man must not only make Progress as in a leisurely Journey, but move on quickly with Vigour and Life, stretch every Joynt and bend his whole Force that nothing get before him. And this is illustrated with a peculiar Emphasis by the Apostle's frequent Allusion to the *Olympick Games*, which were managed with the greatest Solemnity: It was not an ordinary Race, where there may be meaner Candidates for a Prize of no great Value, for there the noblest Youth of *Greece* were engaged, and those of the greatest Abilities for the several Exercises, and that with an uncommon Eagerness and the utmost Application; for a Victor at the *Olympick Games* was attended with a great deal of Glory, and gave the Person an illustrious and distinguished Character through all *Greece*: And so the Honour of such a Conquest excited the Emulation of the Contenders, and stirred up their Ambition to its utmost Activity, and so they were not only extremely diligent and indefatigable in the Time of the Contest, but they prepared themselves beforehand, and took every Mean that might conduce to render them more agile, nimble, and fit for the Work: They laid aside every Weight, as in our Text, yea, they restrained their Appetite to a more than ordinary or otherwise necessary Moderation, as the Apostle informs us, 1 Cor. ix. 25. *And every Man that striveth for the Mastery is temperate in all Things, now they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible.* And so an Allusion to this Race very elegantly points out to us how great the Diligence and Labour of a Christian must be

be, and that his Life is a very laborious Employment.

It is true, there is this remarkable Difference betwixt this and the *Olympick* Game, that there were a great many Contenders one of whom only got the Crown; but here the Honour is not so confined, and every one who holds out to the End of the Race, though he may have been outstripped by another, will be possessed of it: But as to the Greatness of the Labour and Diligence they are the same; for though our Lusts and Corruptions, and a cunning Devil, have no Hope of getting into Heaven where is the Prize, yet they are as assiduous and unwearied in their Endeavours to retard our Motions, and keep us short of the Mark, as if they were Candidates with us, and are as eager to ruine our Souls as we can be to get the Victory. And this is the Use the Apostle makes of it, 1 Cor. ix. 24. *Know ye not that they which run in a Race run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run that ye may obtain.* And the same Thing is held out to us in a great many Places of Scripture, as where we are commanded to *strive to enter in at the strait Gate*, and to *work out the Work of our Salvation*: Which Work, as in our Text it is called a Race, in other Places is compared to the being engaged in a great Conflict, Col. ii. 1. *to fighting the good Fight of Faith*, 1 Tim. vi. 12. and to *wrestling against Principalities and Powers*, Ephes. vi. 12.

So that you see what you must resolve upon, if you be Christians, and what is necessary, before we can have any Pretensions to that Character: We must never dream of indulging our Ease, or thinking to sit down when once we have entred in at the strait Gate; but, after that, unwearied run in the

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the narrow Path, and shun no Labour and Toil,
however fatiguing it may prove, if it can tend to ad-
vance us in our Race. Not only, if we be sincere
Christians, must we resolve to be making constant
Progress in Holiness, walking on in these Paths :
But we must do more, endeavour to run in them,
set no Bounds to our striving this way ; but, like
the Racers in the *Olympick Games*, exert our
Strength and Vigour, that we may come as soon as
possible to the End of our Race. And it is as unseem-
ly and ridiculous for a Christian to neglect this, and
take a little Slumber ; as it would have been for
one of these Runners, to sit down and trifle away
his Opportunity by some vain Amusement, while
his Rival was treading hard upon his Heels, and in
a fair Way to rob the inglorious slothful Candidate
of the Victory : Let all of us then be thus careful
to *exercise our selves unto Godliness*. But

In the *second Place*, I take notice from the Text,
and this will confirm the preceeding Truth, *name-*
ly, that the Christian Race is crowded with Diffi-
culties and Dangers, full of Discouragements which
are apt to dispirit the Runner and make him faint ;
and there are *Dens of Lions, and Mountains of Leopards*
in the Ways, ready to fright and turn him back-
wards. This is plainly pointed out in the *Weights*
which cleave so fast to us, in the *Sin which easily be-*
sets us, and in *Patience's* being recommended to us,
which shews, that there are a great deal of Hard-
ships which render that Frame of Spirit so necessa-
ry. And indeed this is plain from the Nature of
the Thing, how incomparably difficult must it be,
think you, to attack numerous Lusts, that have
been for a long Time rampant without any Re-
straint, and have been used to the Mastery over us ;
and

looking unto Jesus the Author, &c. 321

and which, to speak so, are not in an equal Field of Battle, but covered with inaccessible Intrenchments, for they have got the Possession of our Hearts, and have fortified innumerable strong Holds of Iniquity there, which must be pulled down by the Christian : While he is naturally so lazy ; and hath too endeared Ties to his *right Hand and right Eye Sins*, to tear himself willingly from their Embraces ? How hard a Thing is it to *bring into Captivity every rebellious Thought under the Obedience of Christ*, to cure our Passions that are deeply rooted in our Natures and made furious by a long Indulgence. Solomon tells, *Prov. xvi. 32. He that is slow to Anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit than he that taketh a City* : And if the Conquest be so glorious, it must readily be both difficult and dangerous. And indeed it must be both laborious and hazardous to *fight against spiritual Wickednesses* : And engage in War with so cunning, indefatigable and powerful an Enemy as the Devil is, whose Diligence is quickened by his hellish Malice and Hatred, and directed by his long Experience in destroying ; who hath so many Legions of Hell at his Command, such a Crowd of Lusts and Passions, as are drunk with the Blood of Souls, and used to entice or fright them into the Pit of Perdition.

Besides, this mightily heightens the Danger of a Christian in running his Race, and the Difficulty of Religion, that we *sojourn in Mesek, and dwell in the Tents of Kedar*, have our Abode in a present evil World ; and so must fight upon the Enemy's Ground, which he is thoroughly acquainted with, knows all the Snares and Traps in it, and the Places where he may gain most Advantage over Souls, and is skilful in Stratagems to draw them into their Ruin.

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This World is a *Valley of Tears*, where every Thing is a Friend to our Corruptions and an Enemy to Godliness, its Favours and Frowns, its Allurements, Pleasures and Terrors, the Force of its evil Communication, and the Influence of an universal Example, all conspire in retarding us in running our spiritual Race, weigh us down to the World, or throw some one deceitful Vanity in the Way or other, which is ready to captivate our Imagination, and divert us from our heavenly Pursuit.

And if none of all these prove effectual, he hath Persecution and Death to assist him; the abandoning of our Ease, Health, Riches, and Prosperity as to temporal Things; and all the Miseries our Bodies can be subject to, Imprisonment, Poverty, Torture, and then Death it self: Which, it must be owned, are mighty Difficulties, very shocking to human Nature; and a great Prejudice against running in a Race, where a Man must expect to meet with all these dreadful Adversaries, and, before he begins, resolve to take up his Cross, and go undauntedly on it.

Beside all this, how difficult would this Race appear, if we considered how easily we are imposed upon by false Pretences, and flattered out of the straight Way? *These of our own Household are our Enemies*, and our very Virtues themselves are improved by our Adversary to ensnare us; how often does he disguise Sin, and, under their Vizard, get them an easie Access to the Soul, even when it may be in some Measure upon its Guard? How oft does Ambition, Vanity and Self-love, lurk under a Pretext of Zeal for God and his Glory, and these hellish Fires of Envy, Malice and Revenge look something like the heavenly Flame of Love to God and
Re-

Religion, and so make their Way unperceived, and cheat the Soul? How oft does Lukewarmness and a degenerate Coldness put on the Cloke of Moderation and Wisdom, Covetousness pretend to be Frugality, and a profuse Squandering beautifie it self with the fair Appearance of Liberality?

Thus you see in a few Instances, for I must not stay upon these Things, how laborious a Christian's Life is, how closely furrounded with Enemies, subtil and powerful, and that this Race is full of Difficulties and Hazards.

I thought to have remarked in the *third Place*, that since such are the Nature and Circumstances of the Christian Religion, it is highly reasonable for us to slip no Opportunity of making Advances in it, and neglect no Mean for our Safety and Progress: And here, to have shewn you shortly, what is included in *laying aside every Weight*, and the peculiar Watch we ought to have upon *the Sin that easily besets us*; together with the Use that we should make of these great Examples of Faith spoken of in the former *Chapter*. But, because of your Time,

I proceed to the *second Head*, namely, to prove that, notwithstanding these Difficulties and Dangers, we have abundant Reason to keep up our Spirits, and not faint in our Minds: And here I shall but touch at a few of the many and powerful Supports and Encouragements which are afforded us this way, by *looking at Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith*.

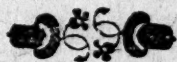
1. Then, hereby we shall see that the Path of Life, however rough and uneasy it be, is not untroden: But that all its Difficulties have been surmounted, and its Hardships got over. Jesus hath run this Race: And hath this peculiar in

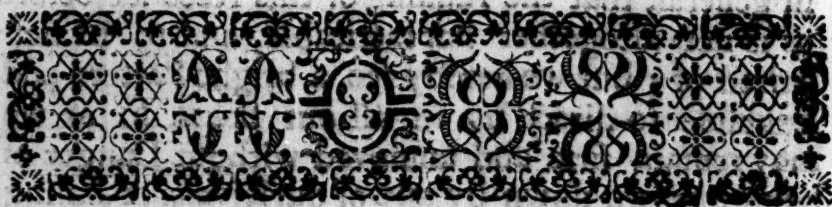
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him, different from the Case of the Patriarchs, and others proposed to our Thoughts in the former *Chapter*, that as he never had the least Degree of Faint-heartedness or Laziness, but was always animated by a divine Courage and persevering Diligence; so he met with all the terrible Variety of Dangers, Affronts and Opposition, which any of the Contenders for the Prize can possibly be exposed to: He ran in the roughest Part of the Way to the Crown; and those that would rob us of that Bliss, the Legions of Hell and the Wickedness of Men, bent the chief of their Attempts and most vigorous Efforts against him, that they might retard him in his Course or sully the Honour of his Victory. Now, what a mighty Comfort is it to a drooping Soul, when sinking under the Apprehensions of the insuperable Difficulties of persevering unto the End, and the Fears of being outmatched by so formidable Enemies in such an uneasy Path, to cast his Eyes upon Jesus who hath gone before him and overcome; in him to behold the Devices of Satan, however cunning, turned into Foolishness, and all his Forces put to a shameful Flight; and to have this practical Demonstration that the Road is not unpassable? Nor need we despair of running to the End of it, when we thus *look at Jesus* who hath finished his glorious Course. Every Ray of the Majesty which surrounds him lights us along the Way, and may kindle our Resolution to attempt it, seeing, though this Work be laborious and fatiguing, yet, it may be got through with Safety and Honour; and that, how distracting soever the Thoughts of such a Race may be at the first, yet, they need not fright us from essaying to run it.

2dly.

2dly. In *looking to Jesus*, we may not only know in general, that the running of this Race set before us is not altogether impracticable, and to be despaired of ; but we hereby see a bright Pattern and Example to direct us in all our Steps, so as we may remain firm and unmoved without Danger of being thrown down by any of our Rivals, or failing of the Prize. The Life of this Redeemer is free from the smallest Blemish, shines with the Beauties of Holiness and the richest Treasures of divine Wisdom : Nor is there any Defect in his successful Conduct in running this Race. And is it not a great Encouragement, in such a difficult hazardous Path, to have a *Lamp to our Feet and a Light to our Paths*, which lays clearly before us the Steps we ought to tread in ; so as neither to tumble over a Precipice, or fall down in our Running ; to have before our Eyes the Methods whereby we may surmount every Difficulty, and come to the End of our Race ? No Case can possibly happen so hard and uneasy, but *looking to this Jesus* will afford us a safe Direction how we ought to manage in it : And we may, by considering the glorious Example, the Life of *the Apostle of our Profession*, become *wiser than the Ancients* and all our Rivals or Enemies in the heavenly Race : And, by endeavouring to imitate it, learn that noble and uncommon Mixture, of the Wisdom of the Serpent and the Harmlessness of the Dove, and of the Courage and Intrepidity of the Lion, and the Meekness and Patience of the silent Lamb. * * * * *





S E R M O N XIV.

PHIL. iii. 13, 14. *Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended; but this one Thing I do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before: I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*



THE first Attempt of the irreconcilable and vigilant Enemy to the Glory of God and the Happiness of Men, is to divert unthinking Sinners from a Consideration of the infinite Danger, their Rebellion against the almighty King of the World exposeth them to; and of the inconceivably momentous Importance of a future State, where dwells Fulness of Pleasure and Joys, or the Extremity of Misery and Wo through the endless Ages: And to this Purpose he amuses them with the Follies of Life, and flatters

ters them into Ease and Security, by the numerous Vanities of a perishing World, which he lays continually before our Eyes, artfully drest up in all their Lustre and Charms. How lamentable is it, that so great a Part of Mankind should be prevailed upon, by these deluding Temptations, to banish God from their Thoughts, and never think upon Religion and Truth, till the Flames of Hell at length awaken them into a Sense of their Madness, in neglecting them while they had *Access to the Grace wherein we now stand?*

But beside this, when the Devil is not able so far to prevail upon others by these Arts, as to support Sin in its Domination over them, and keep them altogether from minding their chief Business and great Interest, he hath another envenomed Arrow in his Quiver, whereby he wounds many Souls, and too much gains his wicked Ends, even upon such as have entered into the Christian Life, and in Sincerity named the Name of the Redeemer: And that is, to lull them softly into Sloth and Laziness, by persuading them that they have attained already to a lively enough Faith and Love, a firm enough Title to the Purchase of the Saviour's Blood, and that they are in no more Hazard of that Wrath, from which he makes them fancy that they have fled a sufficient Distance; and by flattering them into a vain Opinion of the Progress they have made in the Ways of God, and the Length they have arrived to in these Paths: So that they may now sit down quietly and enjoy Ease and Peace, without putting themselves to the Trouble of pursuing Sin and the Devil any further, making a wider Breach in the strong Holds which they have built in our Hearts, or gaining a

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completer Victory over the spiritual Principalities
and Powers which war against our Souls.

And as this dangerous Snare takes with too many, who, though they begun well, soon turn faint and weary, and, instead of *going on from Strength to Strength*, are driven further from the Gates of Zion, or stand still without making any Advances towards them: It is my Purpose at this Time, by the Assistance of God, to propose some Things, the serious Meditation upon which may, by his Blessing, prove useful to convince us that it is absolutely necessary for us, not only to give our Souls to Christ, but, to give them wholly to him; not to remain satisfied with any Measures of Grace and Holiness we may be possessed of, but to strive that we may attain higher and still more exalted Degrees of them: To prove to you that, as Christians, we are obliged to be always on the growing Hand in the Knowledge of God; and not only to be kindled with a Fire of Love to the Redeemer, but to be still adding Fuel to that divine Flame, that it may burn with the more fervent Brightness till at length it come to fill the whole of our Soul in Heaven: And, in a Word, to shew how reasonable it is for us to set no Limits to our Endeavours in Religion, to be still going forward, running, striving, wrestling, till we be made completely holy in the Presence of God; *forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto these Things which are before, to press toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

I shall not take any further Notice of the Context, than what may be necessary for the clearer Explication of the Text. The Apostle, in the Be-
gin-

ginning of the *Chapter*, exhorts these to whom he writes to beware of the absurd and impious Notions of the blinded *Jews*, who doted upon a Righteousness of their own, and fondly boasted themselves upon their being of the Circumcision, tho' they were indeed utterly destitute of the Graces, and so deprived of the Blessings of that everlasting Covenant, of which this Circumcision was but the outward Seal. This Exhortation he illustrates from his own Practice, and thence proves that he was not biassed by Self-interest in what he spoke; since he had, in the highest Degree, himself all the Advantages which any *Israelite* could lay claim to: And were there any Value in these Things, no Man could plead more Merit or make larger Pretensions than himself, who was circumcised in the exactest Conformity to the Law; an *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, and that of the strictest and most esteemed Sect amongst them, a *Pharisee*. But he was sensible of their Vanity, abandoned the Thoughts of them, emptied himself of his own Righteousness, and fled unto that of God.

And he also expresseth the considerable Advances which he had made in the Christian Religion, he had *suffered the Loss of all Things for his Saviour*, and counted them but *Dung* that he might win him; and it had been his careful Endeavour to know him, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Suffering, being made conformable to his Death. And then he acquaints us, that, notwithstanding of these vigorous Endeavours and the Progress he made in the Christian Race, it was necessary for him to continue his utmost Care and Application to this Work; since he did not fancy himself to be perfect as he ought to be, nor imagined that he
had

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had attained to these exalted Measures of Faith and Holiness which the Gospel commands, and the sincere Follower of Jesus is bound to aspire after: And that he still wanted to be purified into a Fittedness for Heaven, and stood in need of more Strength that he might be made meet for appearing before the Lord in *Zion*.

And then, in the Words which I have read, he lays before us his own Practice, and the Measures which he pursued from the thorough effectual Conviction that *he had not yet attained, nor was already perfect*. And in them we may consider these *three Things*.

1. We have the great Object of all the Apostle's Aims and Desires, the Thing which he had in his Eye, *the Mark, and the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*.

The Apostle in a great many Passages of his *Epistles*, and particularly in this Place, plainly alludes to the publick *Grecian Games*, and in special to the famous *Olympian Games*, which were so extraordinarily celebrated every where. They were managed with the greatest Solemnity, and the Candidates for the Victory acquired so much Glory by gaining it, that they strove with the most active Diligence and ardent Vigour that they might attain it: Upon this Occasion there was a Goal or Mark, upon which hung the Prize where-with the Victor was to be crowned; and it was placed there to animate the Contenders, by having it in their full View, and chiefly because the Racer who first got to this Mark had a Title to the Prize.

So that by the Mark here, we are to understand the Perfection of Purity and Holiness in Heaven, the Seat of the Blessed, that Sanctuary of Life and Immortality, in which the numerous Mansions of
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for the Prize of the high Calling. 331

Honour and Bliss are placed, and wherein, to use the Phrase, all the Diadems of Glory, wherewith such as continue running to the End of the Christian Race, shall infallibly be crowned. are hung up : Where is the *Prize of the high Calling of God*, namely, that excellent and enduring Happiness which God in the Gospel of his Son proposes to our Hopes, and calls upon us to embrace, that incorruptible Crown, and the Life never to have an End, which is promised to the faithful Followers of the Redeemer. And then it is *the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*: That Fulness of Joy which is the Purchase of his precious Blood ; and which will be so inconceivably complete and great, as to be every way worthy of the untainted Obedience and meritorious Sufferings of the Son of the Highest, and be fully answerable to the Death and Intercession of so exalted a Saviour.

It is observed by some, that in these Games, beside the Prize, there were several lesser Gifts to be bestowed upon such as behaved themselves manfully, though they arrived not to the Honour of the Conqueror, for whom alone the principal Prize was reserved : Agreeably hereto the same Apostle speaks, I. Cor. ix. 24. *Know ye not that they which run in a Race run all, but one receiveth the Prize?* And in Allusion hereto, the chief Prize * in this Place, as distinguished from the Mark †, by which, as I have already observed, we are to understand Heaven, may point out to us that the Apostle set no Bounds to his divine Ambition, but had in his Eye an illustriously glorious Mansion amongst the Seats of the Redeemed, and hoped to be-

* βραβεῖον. † σημεῖον.

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become a bright Star in that shining Firmament.

2dly: We have the Apostle's Management with respect to this *Mark* and *Prize*, *I press toward the Mark*. He was not lazy or languid in this Pursuit, nor did he walk at a slow Pace towards the Prize: But he exerted all his Strength and Activity, stretched himself, and bended his whole Force and Application to this Point; and herein did all his Wishes and Endeavours center, and that in a constant uninterrupted Strain, and not only upon this or that Occasion. The Greek Word * here translated *I press*, signifies to pursue a flying Enemy, and in this Sense thereof it is very elegantly and emphatically applied by the Apostle. He looked upon the *Prize* as a Thing which was not always to remain in his Offer, and ly open to his Attempts; and therefore he the more earnestly aspired after it, and it, as it were, flying fast away from him, spurred him the more fervently, and made him exert all his Powers, and turn the whole Strength of his Spirits this way. This Word also signifies to persecute, as in the 6 Verse of this Chapter. And even this Meaning of it points out to us the utmost Vehemency and Ardor wherewith the Apostle fought the Prize: He, as it were, persecuted it, and gave it no Rest till it became his Portion, and he was made meet for receiving so noble a Reward. Like hereunto is the Exhortation, *Isa. lxii. 6, 7. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not Silence: And give him no Rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a Praise in the Earth.* And this Translation *I persecute or force the Mark and the Prize*, however odd it may seem, is very agreeable to what we have, *Matth. ii. 12.*

That

* διώκω.

for the Prize of the high Calling. 333

That the Kingdom of Heaven, or this Prize, suffereth Violence, and the violent take it by Force. All which Meanings of the Phrase conspire in this, to heighten our Notion of the Apostle's fervent Concern and unwearied Diligence in this important Work.

3dly. We have the Measures the Apostle took, and the Means he made use of in order to his thus pressing towards the Mark. 1. *He forgot the Things which are behind.* I shall afterwards have Occasion to notice one Thing which may be included in this Phrase, and therefore I shall only now mention what seems to be directly intended by it, *namely,* the Degrees of Grace and Holiness he had now arrived at, the Victories he had gained over formerly domineering Sin and Corruption, the Lusts and Passions he had subdued under the Obedience of Christ, and the Way he had already run in the divine Life: These Things were behind, he had now got over them, and they were forgotten by him; not as if he banished them his Memory and never meditated upon them, but only that he did not look at them through a magnifying Glass; he was sensible that notwithstanding thereof *in many Things he offended,* and that it must be very great Folly in him to fancy, that he had got enough of Religion, and run far enough in its Ways; he did not dwell so long upon the Meditation of his Attainments in Grace and Knowledge, as to make him forget that he had still a great deal before him, abundance of Work to employ all his Time and Abilites, and therefore *he reached forth unto the Things which are before,* that is, to the many remaining Graces of the holy Spirit, to the further Progress and higher Advances in every Part of the glorious Character and Life of a Christian, that were necessary to make him meet

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meet for the Prize and his arriving at the Mark. And these Things he reached forth unto, he, as it were, did not stay till he could come running up to them, but stretched out his Hand to lay hold on them, and embraced every Opportunity that might help to carry him forward : Just like Persons that are striving for their Life, to bear up against an impetuous Stream, they'll not only swim with all all their Might, but will be fond of the smallest Twig, by catching at which they may be drawn upwards, or at least keep their Ground.

From these Words thus a little explained this doctrinal Observation seems natively to result, *namely*, that it is the Duty, and a conspicuous Part of the glorious Character of a sincere faithful Follower of the Redeemer, after he hath begun the divine Life of Religion, not to remain satisfied with whatever Measures of Grace and Holiness he may have attained ; but to *leave these Things which are behind*, and, with the utmost Vigour and Activity, to stretch himself that he *may reach to the Things which are before*, still aiming at more exalted Degrees, till at length he be fitted for receiving the Prize, and for being an Inhabitant of that Place, whence every Imperfection fleeth away, and is succeeded by unspotted Purity and Love.

You'll easily perceive how reasonably this Observation is drawn from the Apostle's Account of his own Management, for if he who bore so illustrious a Character amongst the Christians, being not a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, he who had laboured to promote the Interest of the *Messiah's* Kingdom more abundantly than they all, whose Love to him was so ardent, and his Faith so lively, that *to him to live was Christ and to die was*
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Gain; and who was so resigned to the divine Disposal, that *he had learned in every Condition therein to be content*: I say, if such a Person, notwithstanding of these admired Qualities, and so elevated Measures of Grace, did not think he *had attained or was perfect*, but that a great many Things remained before him, which he still wanted and reached forth unto; I am sure the tallest and most flourishing Christians amongst our Assemblies, being but a Dwarf in comparison to his *Stature in Christ*, hath much more Reason not to sit up and rest upon what he may have arrived at, but unwearied to press forward.

In discoursing to you from this Observation, I shall, through the divine Assistance, do these Things. 1. I shall in some Measure lay before you the Duty recommended, and open up its Nature. 2dly. Which I chiefly purpose to insist upon, I will shew the Reasonableness and Necessity of it, and offer some Considerations to perswade us constantly to be making these vigorous Advances in the Christian Course. And then, if your Time allow, I shall draw a practical Inference or two from what shall be discoursed.

Asto the *first* of these, I shall study to be short upon it, and therefore I design only to touch at some of the Expressions in the Text it self to this Purpose. And,

1. The Person who applieth himself to this Duty *forgetteth the Things which are behind*, he doth not swell, after he hath accepted of the great Salvation, and perhaps outstripped others in the Ways of God, nor is he blown up with a Conceit of his Attainments, as if he needed no more, and might here take up his Rest; no, what he hath already

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arrived at, serves only to animate him to advance further: And he so far forgets what he hath left behind, as to run with the same Earnestness as if he were but just entring upon his Course. He is like one of the Racers in the *Olympian Games*, who does not busy his Thoughts with reflecting on the Places he hath passed by, or look back to see how far he is gone in the Course: But fixes his steady Eye straight on the Mark, and is so fervent in this Pursuit, as only to mind the Distance betwixt him and the Prize, and is ready to fancy still that he is but beginning, and to forget what he hath already performed.

2dly. Some think that by the *Things which are behind*, we are also to understand the Pleasures and Wishes of his former Life, which engrossed so much of his Time, and busied his Cares. He left these Things behind: For the vigorous Christian throws out of the Way all the Allurements of a present World, and the Delights of Sin and Sense, that he may not be retarded in his Course by them. The victorious Racer, though his artful cunning Competitors should cause to be strawed alongst his Way Flowers and Garlands, and scatter upon the Road agreeable Amusements which might entertain him at another Time, yet, now he tramples upon them, does not stay a Moment to be diverted with them, but they all are swallowed up by the View of the Prize whither he is hasting. So the active Christian is one who runs in a steady Course heavenwards, and beholds the Honours, the Pleasures, the Profits, the Riches of a present World, upon which the foolish extravagantly dore on every Hand, and which the Devil lays before him, with so indifferent an Eye; and is so little moved by their
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Charms, that he forgets that he leaves such Trifles behind, and looks down upon them with a noble Disdain and Disregard. Thus he answers the Truth we have observed, who forgetteth every Thing but the glorious Prize of the high Calling of God ; minds, values, and pursues nothing else.

3dly. *He reacheth to the Things that are before*, he takes a View of the long Way he hath yet to run, and the amazingly vast Distance there is betwixt him and Heaven the End of his Race, and how far the farthest advanced Saint is from the Perfection of Purity, which spreads it self over all the Inhabitants of that Habitation of God's Holiness : And he beholds through all these divine Paths which are before him, an innumerable Multitude of Christian Graces and Virtues, or more enlarged Measures of them every where scattered ; and he is so eager in his Pursuit, that he stretcheth himself, and reacheth out his Hand at its full Length, in order to his catching hold of them, and being helped on in his Course : And so, as it is, II. Pet. i. 5, &c. *He gives all Diligence to add to his Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness brotherly Kindness, and to brotherly Kindness Charity ; and studieth not only to have these Things in him, but to abound in them.*

And to this Purpose the active Christian embraces readily every Opportunity which offers it self, and improves Ordinances and Providences of whatever Kind, that he may flourish in Religion, and add to his spiritual Stature. When he beholds the Wicked in Prosperity, and blooming Fortune crowning the Head of the Transgressor, he fixes it the deeper in his Mind, that they cannot be very

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valuable Goods, or worth any Thing, which God bestows on his Enemies; and thus he is the more alienated from these sinful Pleasures, which are allotted as a Portion to those Slaves of Satan: And when a sudden Change of Providence overtakes them, and in a Moment blows away their Enjoyments, he, with the more lively Desires, aspires after nobler Blessings, and the more cheerfully leaves Things under the Sun to the ignorant and the blind. *He considers all the Works of God, and so in the Day of Prosperity he is joyful, and in the Day of Adversity he considers.* He improves his Meditation of the divine Goodness, of the pardoning Mercy and redeeming Love of a Saviour, to animate him into a willing Service to so amiable a Master, and to blow up his Love to God in Christ into a brighter Flame; and the Views of God's perfect Purity, to make him strive the more earnestly to be holy as he is holy; of his inexorable Justice, and irresistible Power, to fright him from Sin and Disobedience. In a Word, the Person who *reacheth to the Things which are before*, employs all the Favours of Providence, and also its Frowns, and every Influence of Grace, to his being made perfect and edified, *till he come in the Unity of Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

4thly. Such a vigorous Christian as would perform the Duty mentioned in the Doctrine, is one who presseth towards these Things, and flees quick to the Mark, as the hungry Eagle when hastning to its Prey: He stretcheth his Joynts, runs with all his Might, sweats and labours in this Work, his Eye, his Mind, his Wishes and Endeavours, and his very Soul, are all fixed upon *the Prize of the high*

gh Calling of God: To this he makes every other purpose yield, for he *seeks first*, the first in Time, and with the chief Diligence and Care, *the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*; he useth every Member of his Body and Faculty of his Spirit, as *Instruments of Righteousness unto God*: And he summons up all the Powers of his Soul, and every Thing that is within him, that they may contribute what they can to put Life into his Motion, and add Vigour and Swiftnes to his running towards the heavenly Country, and in seeking this *one Thing needful*.

And *lastly*. The Person we are speaking of, sets no other Bounds to his Endeavours and Diligence, but the *Mark* it self, and *the Prize of the high Calling of God*. He knows that he is commanded to *purifie himself even as God is pure*; to *be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good Works*: And therefore let him have the highest Attainments in Holiness and Grace that ever any Saint arrived to on Earth, he rests not satisfied *with them*, nor will he ever be satisfied with any till he be as holy as God commands him, till he sing the Praises of his King and Redeemer in as loud Songs, and with as vigorous a Love as the Seraph and the Cherub. His Ambition aims at nothing lower than to be fit for joyning in the harmonious Consort of the Hallelujahs of glorified Spirits. And so I am sure he never thinks he hath gone far enough, and run so fast in the Ways of God as he ought while in the Valley of Tears: And the Person who is content with any less Faith or Love than this, and sits down upon what is below it without pressing further, is but a lazy Christian, and performs not the Duty mentioned in the Observation.

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The *second* Head was to shew the Reasonableness and Necessity of this Duty, which we have now in some small Measure explained: And to persuade us accordingly, to be constantly making vigorous Advances in the Christian Life, and to be still on the increasing hand. I can only lay before you a few of the strong and numberless Arguments on so fruitful a Subject.

1. Consider that this is the inseparable Property of a sincere Christian, and the constant Account given of him in the holy Scriptures: So that, however we may flatter our selves and speak Peace to our Souls, fancying that we have fled from the Wrath to come, and complied with the Gospel-call; yet, if we be not vigorous and growing Christians, we have great Ground to fear that we are but vain Pretenders to that Character, and are yet *in the Gall of Bitterness and the Bond of Iniquity*. We are assured that *Faith without Works is dead* and to no effect; and, in like manner, that Faith and Holiness which stand still and increase not, can have but little Spirituality in them, if any at all: Thus the Kingdom of Heaven is very emphatically compared, *Matth. xiii. 31. To a Grain of Mustard-seed*, which though it be small when sown, groweth *the greatest amongst Herbs, and becometh a Tree*. So agreeably hereto we have a noble Description of the Righteous, *Psal. xcii. 12, &c. The righteous shall flourish like the Palm Tree, he shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon: Those that be planted in the House of the Lord, shall flourish in the Courts of our God; they shall bring forth Fruit in old Age, they shall be fat and flourishing*. Regenerating Grace, and the Work of the holy Spirit in Conversion, plants us in the Garden of Life; but then 'tis with a Design that we

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we should grow taller and more beautiful when there : Else we shall be transplanted into the Wilderness of Sin, and at length be cut down and cast into the Fire. It is a very remarkable Passage, and shews the native Influence which the Beginning and Seeds of Grace hath upon Increase therein, II. Pet. i. 9. where, having exhorted to be still adding one Virtue and Grace to another, he says, *But he that lacketh these Things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old Sins.* So that you see it is not sufficient that you have some spiritual Strength ; for except we go on from Strength to Strength, we can never appear before the Lord in Zion.

2dly. Let us consider to this Purpose, what is the Time and Season while we are in this Earth, and we shall find that nothing is more reasonable for us, than to make further Advances in Religion. No more is expected of a Tree that hath arrived at its full Growth, than that it should continue, without decaying, to bear Fruit ; but the Case is quite different with respect to a young Plant that is only springing up to Maturity : Now, our Life upon Earth is a State of Trial, and we never attain to Perfection till *Death be swallowed up of Victory* ; nor do we partake of that Firmness and Strength which is necessary for the full Growth of a Christian, till we be seated above by the Side of that pure River of Water of Life, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb ; and therefore we should certainly still be becoming more and more meet for that happy Country. The true Christian, like the Cedar of God planted by him, must ever be increasing till he become like the Tree in *Nebuchadnezzar's Vision*, Dan. iv. 20. To
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which I may allude, *The Tree that thou sawest which grew and was strong, whose Height reached unto Heaven, and the Sight thereof to all the Earth; whose Leaves were fair and the Fruit thereof much.* So the Believer must never make a stand in Holiness, but be still growing in Grace and the Knowledge of God our Saviour, till his Height reach unto Heaven, and he be as holy and pure as the blessed Spirits there, who never wander from their Duty nor languish in their Love. And this is the very Design of the Gospel of Christ, it was never intended to flatter Men in their Lusts, or indulge them in Laziness and Imperfection.

It is true, we ow to the Grace of God and the Mediator's Righteousness, that our weak Services and low Devotions, which at the best are earthly and carnal, should ever be accepted of God; and had he required perfect Holiness from us as a necessary Condition of our Forgiveness, we must have perished for ever in our Sins: But then, we are to remember, that, though he in infinite Mercy does not reject Gospel-sincerity, yet, he accepts it only from such as honestly endeavour after a more exalted Purity, and press forward that they may be *without Spot or Wrinkle, blameless and unreprougeable in Love.* Nor can there be a more provoking Affront done to the Grace of God, than to imagine that it gives us the smallest Encouragement, to rest satisfied with any Thing less than sinless Obedience. So that you see, except we would abandon all Hopes of being saved by Jesus Christ, and renounce him for the Captain of our Salvation, we must still be growing more and more like him, to know the Power of his Resurrection, and

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the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being in every Thing conformed unto him our Head.

3dly. Another strong Argument for Vigour and growing in Grace, ariseth from the great and peculiar Hazards which attend the Neglect of it. He that does not increase in Religion, will not readily continue where he hath already arrived to: But is in the extremest Danger of going backwards, and losing the Fruit of his former Labours. We should not only consider that we have a long Race to run; and how great Things must be done, before we can be *prepared for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*: But also reflect that, like the Racers in the Games, we have others to deal with who strive to get the start of us, and if we stand still they'll obtain the Victory, and ruine us eternally. We have strong Lusts and Passions that are still upon the growing hand, and they'll soon stifle a lazy Religion that loves Ease and does not move forward: And we have a watchful, malicious cunning Enemy, the Devil, who is never at rest and knows not what Sloth or Idleness is; and, if we be not increasing in Grace and advancing to Perfection, he'll not miss the Opportunity of lulling us into Security, and, by Degrees, into a fatal Stupidity; and while we are asleep, he will be fortifying his strong Holds within our Hearts, and repairing those which we, it may be, formerly conquered from him. If once then we have begun a religious Life, and got the Victory over Sin and Satan, we must not rest there, else he'll soon recruit and come upon us with redoubled Force: No, we must press forward, pursue the more vigorously our broken Enemies, and not give them a Moment to rally again, and never leave

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any of our Lusts and Passions only half-dead, else they'll revive while we decay; but let us be lively in Faith and Holiness, till we bring them wholly under Subjection. A Cessation of Arms is always foolish and dangerous in the Christian Warfare, and, when once we engage in it, we should never lay down our Arms, till through our invincible General we become *more than Conquerors*, and under his Conduct be brought safe unto Glory. This is the true Way to blossom and flourish in the House of our God, to be preserved from the Snares of Satan, and the Deceitfulness of Sin, and at length be crowned with Glory, Honour and Immortality, which shall surround the Head of him who endures to the End.

4thly. We should be animated hereto from a Consideration of the glorious *Mark*, the excellent *Prize* whither we are running. If we knew what this Happiness were, which God hath in Store for the vigorous Christian, with what Haste would we run to it, and not make any Delay? What Madness must it be, not to press with all our Strength, and exert our utmost Activity, for a Blessedness that is above our highest Expectations, and satisfies our most raised Desires, where there are *no Tears nor Sorrow*, no Mixture of Imperfection, but all is perfect and complete; where the Pleasures never lose their Relish, but are to Eternity fresh and ever new; where no Cloud hangs over the Understanding, no rebellious Passion disturbs the Mind, nor any Disorder in the Affections; where God himself shall take Pleasure in making us happy, and will fill us with Joys till we can contain no more; where the Rivers of the purest Delight will, with the strongest Torrent, overflow all our Souls
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and leave no Room for a remaining Wish: Where we shall dwell in the Company of these glorious Spirits, who all excel in immortal Beauty and Strength; and of our Forefathers, Friends and Relations in Christ, whom we loved upon Earth, all freed from their several Defects and Imperfections which made their Society less agreeable while here below, and purified into a Fittedness for the nobler Endearments of a heavenly Friendship: And, which is still more ravishing, where we shall be plunged into an Ocean of eternal Love, have God and the Redeemer for our Father and Friend; and have those *everlasting Arms*, which keep the World from falling and could easily shake the Universe into Pieces, *always underneath us* to make us happy and safe: Where we are united to a Body that is lively and spiritual, subject no more to Sicknes and Pain, nor in any Hazard of Death and Dissolution? Now is not such a *Prize*, this *high Calling of God in Christ*, enough to spur up all our Endeavours, make us leave the Things that are behind, and press forward?

5thly. Let us consider the General, under whose Conduct we are commanded to *press forward*: And this, if any Thing, will animate us to the Performance of our Duty. It is something excusable in Soldiers not to be hasty in marching against an Enemy, or forward in the Fight, if they serve under a Captain who is cowardly or inactive, and by his Example rather induces them to Laziness than quickens them to Vigour: But how inglorious and shameful must it be for us Christians, to be lingring behind, to weary of the Hardships and Fatigue of this spiritual Warfare, or ever to turn faint, when he who leads us to the Battle, hath
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Undergone infinitely more Dangers and Difficulties than he commands us to bear up against? He left the Glory of Heaven, the mighty God was born of a Woman, and became a Subject of *Cesar's*: How patiently endured he the Contradiction of Sinners against himself, bore our Infirmities, was assaulted by the fiery Darts of the Devil, and in his own Person sustained the Shock of all the Legions of Darkness, and was made a *Captain of Salvation perfect through Sufferings*? And now think upon it, lazy Christian, was he so vigorous and active in his Work to save thee from the Flames of Hell, and wilt thou be slothful in fleeing from them? Did he become obedient to the Death of the Cross, and shed his precious Blood to wash thee from all thy Pollutions, and dost thou neglect to apply to this Fountain and be cleansed from thy Shame? Did he do and suffer so much to purchase the Graces of his holy Spirit, to rescue thee from the Tyranny of Satan, and fit thee for Glory, and wilt not thou exert thy self to grow in them? *Be astonished at this, O ye Heavens, and horribly afraid.* How may the Thoughts of this cover our Souls with Blushes, and make us ashamed, when we look up to our Redeemer, and consider that the Angels, though not under our Obligations to him, for *he took not upon him the Nature of Angels*, are yet so nimble and vigorous in his Service, and always stand ready to run in doing his Pleasure.

6thly. I shall, in the last Place, only mention this one Thing, which puts a vast Difference betwixt us and the Runners in the *Olympian* and other Games. Though they did their utmost to gain the Prize, yet it was necessary for them to be
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careful, that they did not outdo and overheat themselves or their Horses at the Beginning, lest their Spirits might quite fail them before they got to the End: But Christians need be in no Fear or Anxiety in this Matter, they never can acquire more Spirits, than by spending them all in the vigorous Advances to further Degrees of Holiness; because God is our Strength, and we may ever draw Influences of Grace from him, in whom dwells all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily, a Fountain which ever overflows and can never be exhausted. Let us therefore joyn with the Psalmist David, Psal. lx. 11. Give us help from Trouble, for vain is the Help of Man: Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our Enemies.

Your Time will not allow to draw any Inferences from the Doctrine, and indeed the whole of the Discourse hath been in it self practical: I shall therefore conclude by reading these two Passages of Scripture to you, Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God. For consider him that endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your Minds. And I. Cor. ix. 24, 25, and 26. Know ye not that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run that
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ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Mastery, is temperate in all Things: Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible; I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air.



S E R-



S E R M O N X V .

JEREM. ii. 5. *Thus saith the Lord, What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after Vanity; and are become vain?*



HERE is nothing more reasonable, when we have a Prospect of again naming the Name of Christ, in that solemn Institution of the Christian Religion, the Lord's Supper, of mixing our selves with the Armies of *Israel*; and of professing to be the faithful Followers and willing Subjects of *Messiah* the King, who resolve to bow their Necks and become obedient to his Laws, and, under his Conduct alone, to aspire after eternal Salvation: When, by sitting down at that holy Table, we are about publicly to declare our Hopes of being Partakers of the

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the Mercies and Blessings of the everlasting Covenant, and to engage our Souls to all the Terms thereof; to consecrate our selves and Services to the Honour of our Saviour, and fight with persevering Courage and Fidelity against our own Lusts and sinful Pleasures, and all the other Enemies of his holy Kingdom, till we subdue and bring them under the Obedience of Christ; and that we shall our selves be crucified to the World and its most alluring Charms, abandon the Delights of the foolish, and become sincerely religious. I say, upon such an Occasion, it is highly reasonable for us to reflect upon our own bypast Management, since the last Opportunity of this kind we avouched our selves to be the Lord's: And to consider how unanswerable the Practice of our Lives hath been to the Words of our Mouth; how treacherously we have broken our Vows, and ungratefully rebelled against the Redeemer; and how often we have run over to the Camp of his Enemies, and, by our wicked Works, conspired against our Lord, and promoted the Designs of Satan his great Adversary; and how little Progress the best of us have made in the Paths of the divine Life; how cool we have been in the Love of Christ, and how lazy in his Service, and, instead of making vigorous Advances, have rather been driven further back from the Gates of Zion: And, upon the Views hereof, to endeavour to be affected with a deep Sense of our Baseness and Vileness, in thus requiting the Lord, how shameful and disgraceful it is for Soldiers to be so unfaithful to their General, and so cowardly and fearful in the spiritual War, and how infinitely unreasonable the fulfilling the Pleasure of Sin and Satan must

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must be; that so, from a thorough Conviction hereof, we may be animated to more steady Resolutions, *as we have done wickedly to do so no more*, may have the more unfeigned and deeper Sorrow for our Transgressions, and be prepared for the Actings of a lively Faith and an ardent Love, when we are again about to partake of his Body and Blood. And he is, notwithstanding all our Evils, still offering to be pacified towards us.

And as there seems to be nothing more conducive to these Things, than our having suitable Impressions of the infinite Loving-kindness and Grace of our God and Saviour, of the unspotted Excellency of true Religion, and of the Reasonableness of all its Ways. It is therefore my Purpose at this Time, by the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, to endeavour to make us ashamed of our Sins, and cover our Soul with Blushing; to persuade us of our inconceivably foolish Ingratitude, in forsaking the Fountain of living Waters, and of the abominable disgraceful Nature of all Iniquity; and so to excite in our Souls a lively Sorrow and hearty Repentance of our numberless Provocations, to make us lothe our selves and be astonished at our treacherous Backslidings: By shewing you the infinite Amiability of our God, the endearing Loveliness of true Religion in whatever Prospect we behold it, the many alluring Ties whereby, both in Duty and Gratitude, we are bound to be altogether his; and that none of us can ever have reason to complain of God, or alledge any Thing which can be a Cloke and Excuse for our Revoltings from him.

Nor, indeed, is it easie to conceive a more moving Argument to godly Sorrow and Repentance,
and

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and which should more readily cover us with Confusion, and make us hide our Faces in the Dust; than the Answer which every one of us, after serious Reflexion, will be obliged to give to the Question God proposeth in our Text, *What Iniquity have we or our Fathers ever found in him, that we have gone so far from him; and have walked after Vanity, and have become vain.*

In which Words, for I shall not spend your Time by an Account of the general Subject of this Chapter, we may shortly consider these two Things:

i. We have the sinful backsliding Condition of Israel. They were gone far from God, their Minds and Affections were alienated from him, they did not come to him as their chiefest Joy, they sought not his Friendship and Favour, nor studied to entertain Communion and Fellowship with their Maker, but they banished him from their Thoughts, and so put his Laws at the greatest Distance; they strove to stifle any Convictions of their Duty, and to blot out any Remains of the Remembrance of his Name that were to be found with them, and to run without the Reach of his Exhortations and Reproofs. And this, in some Measure, is the State of every one of us: *Our Iniquities separate betwixt us and our God*; and the smallest Compliances with Temptations, the least Gratifications of our corrupt Inclinations, are Wings wherewith we fly swiftly away from God and the Perfection of his Holiness.

And then, as a Consequence hereof, *they walked after Vanity, and were become vain*: This may directly refer to the Idolatry of the Jews, which was the epidemical Disease amongst them, and
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so difficult to be cured. Idols are frequently expressed in Scripture by *Vanity*. Deut. xxxii. 21. *They have moved me to Jealousie with that which is not God, they have provoked me to Anger with their Vanities.* And Jer. xiv. 22. *Are there any among the Vanities of the Gentiles that can cause Rain?* And this is a very fit Name for them, they being utterly unprofitable to their Adorers; unable to hear their Cries, reward their Services, or contribute any Thing to their Happiness: And if so, they must certainly be vain, who were so stupidly foolish as to forsake the living God, and put their Confidence in these deceiving Lies. But this may be also very well applied to Sin of whatever kind, Disobedience to God, and the Offers which Sin and Satan make to allure us thereto, are indeed Vanity; their Promises are false and flattering, and, however their Inchantments may amuse unthinking Sinners for a little Time, they will certainly fail them, and prove a Deceit and Cheat at the last: For they have nothing of real Good, and their most lasting Profits are like the Gains of a Man in a Dream, which vanish away when he is roused from his Sleep; so that every Person who pursues any sinful Pleasure or Advantage, is really enamoured with a vain Shew, and catches at a disguised nothing.

2dly. In the Text we have the amazing Baseness and the infinite Unreasonableness of foolish Men, in thus departing from God and not running in the Ways of Religion, very emphatically and elegantly held forth to us in this affecting Question, which God himself puts to Sinners, *Thus saith the Lord, What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me? Did they ever find me false to my Promises,* or

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deluding them with empty Hopes? Can they charge me with Perfidy, or the least Failure in any Thing which I engaged to perform? Which of my Commands were unjust? In what Part of my Management did I give them occasion to complain of Cruelty and Rigour, as did their old *Egyptian* Masters, who required Brick though they gave no Straw? This seems to be the properest Meaning of the Word *Iniquity* in this Place. But it hath also a larger and more diffusive Extent. The Service of God is proposed by him to Sinners, as attended with the truest Peace and noblest Pleasure, as the most delightful and advantageous Employment, all whose *Ways are Pleasants and her Paths perfect Peace*: And so God here puts the Question to them, if they had any Reason to change their Sentiments, and to think him ever a whit less profitable a Master than he proclaimed himself to be? If he had ever missed to become their chiefest Joy, and a Source of Satisfaction to their Souls when they in Sincerity applied to him? A Question much of the same Nature we have from God in the 31 Verse of this same Chapter, *Have I been a Wilderness unto Israel? A Land of Darknes?*

I need scarce mention to you, that it is ordinary in Scripture to express a very strong Affirmation or Denial by way of Question. And indeed the Phrase in our Text is very beautiful and lively, and hath a great deal more Force and Significancy in it, than if God had said positively, Your Fathers found no Iniquity in me: For thereby he refers the Matter to themselves, and makes their own Consciences Judges in the Case; nor does he hurry them into a precipitate hasty Answer, he does not
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take them at a Disadvantage, but bids them, as it were, employ some Time to deliberate calmly; and see if they could find any of God's Ways unequal; or invent the least Pretext to cover their Folly and Madness in running after Vanity; and he would give them a fair Hearing. Like to this we have *Micah vi. 2, 3. The Lord hath a Controversie with his People, and he will plead with Israel: O my People, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testifie against me.*

May we seriously ponder, while it is yet the Day of Salvation, what Answer we ought to give to this important Question, which will, at the great Day of Accounts, cover with everlasting Shame; and put to an eternal Silence, every obstinate impenitent Transgressor.

Many useful Truths might be observed from these Words, and their Connexion with the other Parts of the *Chapter*: But I shall only take Occasion from them to observe this one Doctrine, *namely*, that the whole of the divine Conduct towards Sinners, view it in all its Parts, turn it up on every Side, is so equal and just, completely answerable to all his Promises and the highest Expectations of his People, so suitable to the unbounded Goodness and infinite Bounty of his Nature, so full of Grace and Truth, and clothed with the endearing Allurements of incomprehensible Mercy and overflowing Compassions, that Sinners, who go far from this God and pursue Vanity, must be guilty of the most horrid Injustice, abominable and monstrous Ingratitude, and the most extravagant Folly, without leaving any the least Remain of the smallest Excuse.

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In discoursing to you upon this Subject, I shall, by the divine Assistance, do these Things.

1. I shall propose some Considerations to confirm and illustrate this doctrinal Truth in its several Parts, by taking a short Review of the divine Management with respect to Mankind; where I may also have occasion to take Notice of the Unreasonableness of the Complaints that Sinners are ready to make against God, and of the Insufficiency of the Clokes they bring to cover their Backslidings from him: And, because this is what I chiefly design to insist upon, I shall, as I go along, in some Measure, shew the Influence what may be said ought to have upon our Performance of the Duties particularly incumbent upon us this Day of solemn Humiliation and Fasting, *namely*, to make us ashamed of all our Iniquities, and loathe our selves upon the account of our many Abominations, and to excite us unto a godly Sorrow and a sincere thorough *Repentance never to be repented of*.

2dly. If your Time allow, I shall shortly lay before you the Vanity of Sin and its Pleasures, under whatever Disguise they endeavour to insinuate themselves into our Affection and Esteem, and so prove that every Person who disobeys God thereby becomes vain.

3dly. I shall draw a few Inferences from what may be said.

As to the *first* of these it will not be improper,

1. To look a little back to the happy Condition wherein God left Man, after he created him by the Word of his Power, and seated him in Paradise. Then he was surrounded with the Glory of unspotted Purity, and clothed with the Perfection

fection of Innocence as a Garment of Beauty : God himself became his chiefest Joy, which nothing, beside his own Folly, could have interrupted or diminished : No Cloud then hung over his Understanding, or rebellious Passions disturbed his Mind ; nor was there any Disorder in his Affections, his Conscience did not then disquiet his Thoughts and sting him with its tormenting Convictions, but he possessed a divine Serenity ; and a perfect Calm, constant and unmoved like that in the Regions of Love above, overspread all his Soul ; nor had he any Enemy to fear, for he lorded it over the inferior Creatures, the most savage of which were willing Subjects to him ; the Armies of Heaven served their common Master, and were all upon his Side ; and, so long as he stood firm in his Allegiance to the sovereign Lord, the Sword of his Strength, and the Shield of his Excellency, were terrible enough to fright away the Rage and Power of the roring Lion. It is true, *he was made a little lower than the Angels*, and was united to a Body : But then, it was a Body purified from the Seeds of Corruption and Death, immortal as the Soul, not subjected to Diseases and Pains, nor threatned with Decay and Dissolution ; a House so well built by God himself, that no pure Inhabitant of it could ever have said, *I am sick*. Surely our first Father could have had nothing to answer to God's Question, *What Iniquity found you in me ?*

And now, can we think upon this State, and consider what we are now debased to, and not shed some Tears, and be affected with Sorrow and Shame ? Amazing Change ! to have that God who was our best Friend, an enraged Enemy ; and that

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Voice which was the most pleasing to our Souls, now awful and frightful with its Thundring; his Presence which was all our Comfort, Peace and Joy, now filled with Terrors and Dread: Every where Disorder in the Affections, raging Lusts and furious Desires, nothing but Horror and Confusion, where was before the Perfection, Beauty and Harmony; and a peaceful Conscience turned into a gnawing Worm, every Thing about us become an Enemy, and we exposed to their Fury and Insults without Guard or Defence. Can we look at this Pinnacle of Glory and Honour, from whence Sin hath thrown us down into the lowest Abyss of Misery and Disgrace, and not be ashamed? Or can we, without Blushing and Confusion of Face, behold our selves puddling in the Mire of Sin and Sense, shamefully pursuing the same low sordid Pleasures with the Beasts that perish, and, like them, under the Power of our Senses; when we think upon our divine Original, and the Nobleness of our Birth, that we are immortal Spirits, capable of Blessings never to have an End, and who once soared aloft, and aspired after Heaven and the Rivers of its Pleasures? And indeed, it is a very fit Subject of Meditation upon a Fast-day, and what may tend to make us ashamed and repent of our present Vileness and Disgrace, to take a serious View from whence we are fallen.

And, to say no more upon this, can there be possibly any Iniquity in that God, who might in Justice have thrown us into the lowest Hell, while, instead of being caught hold by these devouring Flames, *we have Access to the Grace wherein we stand?* Or can we have ever any Reason to complain of him, when we stripped our selves of the Ornaments

ments of Innocence, and wilfully threw away our Glory and Crown which he gave us, when at the Beginning we were Holiness to the Lord; and preferred the gratifying of a vain Curiosity, or an impious Ambition, to the numberless Favours wherewith he loaded us; and, though he made us perfect, found out to our selves many Inventions? But let us consider a little,

2dly. The Miserableness of that State whence this God delivered us, and the great Hindrances to our Freedom and Bliss which were necessarily to be removed out of the Way; and we shall see, that we or our Fathers, instead of finding any Iniquity in God, may discover an unbounded Ocean of unfathomable Love, and a thousand Arguments to fill with Shame, and stop the Mouths of such as ungratefully and undutifully depart from him. Clouds and Mists surrounded our Eyes, and caused us to err, which must be driven away before we could see the Paths which lead to Life; and this Darkness covered the whole of our Understanding, and was thicker than the *Egyptian* that might have been felt: And our Blindness being natural and from the Womb, rendred it the more incurable. All within us was in Disorder and Confusion, our Lusts rebelling against the Voice of our Reason, and hurrying us into endless Ruin, and our immortal Spirits pitiful Slaves to every tyrannical Passion or Pleasure: From all which how difficult must it be to deliver us? And, which was still more, Terrors from God made us afraid, and caused our Joynts to tremble; we had that mighty Arm full of Power, that Hand which can shake the Universe into nothing, lifted up against us, enraged Omnipotency animated by his inexorable

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Justice, and unspotted Holiness ready to take Vengeance on our Inventions, and repay us for all the Affronts we did to the Honour and Glory of his Government: And what Angel, how noble so ever, durst adventure upon so hard a Work, as to pacifie and stay him? There were innumerable Devils who had got Possession of our Hearts and kept us in Slavery; and the whole Legions and Powers of Darkness must be put to Flight, before we could be loosed from our Chains. And, in short, the Way betwixt us and Happiness was every where full of other Difficulties and Dangers, *Dens of Lions and Mountains of Leopards*. I am sure the Freedom from Evils, where the Advantages flowing to us from it are so excellent, and the Work it self so hard to be performed, is a Demonstration that the God who delivered us from so great a Death, can never leave us the least Reason to fret and repine, or to complain that there is any Iniquity with him.

Granting that he made thee sometimes to suffer hard Things, to drink the Wine of Astonishment, and denied to gratify thy Inclinations: Yet, as this must be always less than our Iniquities deserve, so they are infinitely recompensed, if we take a View of the horrible Pit and the miry Clay whence he hath drawn us; and a Person that would infallibly have been drowned, may as reasonably murmur at one who drew him alive out of the Waters, because that he caught hold of his Hair, and, it may be, pulled a few of them out in saving him. I may very well apply to this Purpose the Description we have of the Wilderness, in the Verse following the Text, *Neither, said they, where is the Lord that brought us up out of the Land of Egypt,*
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that led us through the Wilderness, through a Land of Deserts and of Pits, through a Land of Drought and of the Shadow of Death, through a Land that no Man passed through, and where no Man dwelt? Can it be any Iniquity in our glorious Deliverer, though he should expose us to Scorn and Reproach, when he might have abandoned our Souls to everlasting Shame and Contempt? Might he without the smallest Iniquity have thrust us into the lowest Hell, to be devoured by its dreadful Flames, and can ever any Piece of his Management towards us, while on Earth, yield the least Pretence to colour over our departing from him? Ungrateful Sinner! how vile and unworthy would any Man be thought, who should prove forgetful of a Friend that had delivered him from a grievous Slavery, who had supported him when sinking under his Calamities, or rescued him from a torturing Death; and, instead of Love, should repay him Hatred or Neglect? And are not we infinitely baser, in forgetting all the Benefits wherewith our Maker has loaded us; in affronting and abusing him who saved us from Evils, incomparably more terrible than any which can befall us on Earth; and in running far from him, who proved our best and only Friend in Extremity? How may Blushing cover our Souls, when we look at our selves, while wallowing in our own Blood, no Eye to pity us, helpless and without Hope; and reflect upon the undutiful Returns we have made to him, who, seeing us in that doleful Condition, said unto us, Live, and threw over us the Garment of everlasting loving Kindness? Every one of us may apply to our selves, and do it with Sorrow and Shame, what is said to Israel, Deut. xxxii. 6, 10. whose Deliverance from Egypt, and journey-
ing

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ing through the Wilderness, are an Emblem and
Type of what a good God hath wrought for Sin-
ners, in freeing them from the Bondage of Satan
and their own Lusts. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O*
foolish People and unwise ? Is not he thy Father that
hath bought thee ? Hath he not made thee, and esta-
blished thee ? He found him in a desert Land, and in
the waste howling Wilderness ; he led him about, he in-
structed him, he kept him as the Apple of his Eye.
But,

3dly. I shall but just mention the Way whereby
God brought about our Deliverance, and pro-
cured the Salvation offered to us, and it will be
evident that there can be no Possibility for any of
us to find the least Iniquity in him. When Sacri-
fices and Burnt-offerings would not do ; and the
Hope of Man's Redemption must have been for e-
ver fruitless and vain, if there were not a more
valuable Atonement : He amazed Heaven it
self with a Mystery of Love and Grace, he sent
the only begotten of the Father, who is himself
the mighty God, that he might be the Saviour
of Sinners, he gave him for a Covenant to the People ;
and accordingly in the Fulness of Time he took on him
the Seed of Abraham, was subjected to our Weak-
nesses and Infirmities, became the Scorn of Sinners,
and endured their continued Contradiction against him-
self, and at length was made obedient to the Death of
the Cross, and was numbred amongst Transgressors, God
laid upon him the Iniquities of us all, and by his Stripes
were we healed ; and thus, by his precious Blood
he made an End of Sin, finished Transgression, and
brought in everlasting Righteousness ; and, having fully
answered all the Ends of his tabernacling amongst
Men, he was made a Captain of Salvation perfect
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through Sufferings, and, by his Resurrection from the dead, was declared the Son of God with Power, and then ascended far above all Heavens, where he now sits on the right Hand of the Majesty on high, both Lord and Christ, henceforth expecting till his Enemies be made his Footstool.

And now, upon the View of these amazing Steps, may not the Question be asked, *What Iniquity find we in God's Ways? What Blemish or Defect?* Is there any Thing to fright us from such a Redeemer, that we should run far from him? Or is there a Want of any Thing whereby we could be allured to a Saviour? Surely here are the strongest Bands of a Man, and the most amiable and beautifullest Cords of Love. Can we desire any Thing more in a Prophet to teach us, than that he should be *Grace and Truth* it self; he in whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and of Knowledge; and who is incomparably readier to cause his glorious Light shine into our Souls, than we can be to receive it; and who does not, like God at Mount Sinai, make his Instructions and Commands terrible by dreadful Thunders, but reasons with us, beseeches and intreats us in the still calm Voice of the Gospel? Or can we wish for a nobler Priest than he, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens*; whose Godhead put such an infinite Value into his Sacrifice, that we can have no doubt of its taking away Sin? What Iniquity, what Spot or Defect find we in that pure white Raiment of the Saints, the Righteousness of the Redeemer, which, if we be clothed with it, will make us beautiful and glorious in the Sight of God and the holy Angels, and protect us safe from offended Justice

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Justice which would otherwise tear us into Pieces? Or can we desire to be Subjects to a more amiable King, or one better qualified to govern and protect us? His large and great Dominion reacheth from Sea to Sea, he hath the Government of the whole invisible World, *the Keys of Hell and of Death*: The Hosts of Heaven stand ready to do his Pleasure, while the Legions of Darknes are still bound in Chains of which he hath the Management. Or can we wish to be more safe and secure than under the Wings of this almighty King, who can easily beat down before his Face his malicious Foes, upon whom *the Enemy can never exact, nor the Son of Mischief do him wrong?*

And then, (which is a ravishing Consideration) he is as great in Love as in Power. It is he who died for you, that ye might become *Life and Light in the Lord*: Who, if I may speak so, preferred your Happiness to the Glory of Heaven; for he vailed it over with Flesh, and underwent the most scornful Reproaches and the most cruel Sufferings, to save us. How lovely a Sovereign! how endeared should he be to us? and may not *the Heavens stand astonished and be horribly afraid*, that we refuse to serve such a Master, and run far from him? Imagine but *Messiah the King*, while shedding his precious Blood for our sakes upon the Cross, putting the Question, *What Iniquity do you find in me?* What could we answer him? And, indeed, is it to be imagined, that he who gave so high a Proof of the most exalted and highest Love to Sinners, should ever do any Thing which might give them Ground to complain of him, and not consult their Interest more than they can possibly do themselves? Though his Laws seem at first
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View harsh and rigid, and what he teaches appears to be *hard Sayings*, that the Devil and our Hearts raise many plausible Objections against a religious Life and the Ways of God : Yet is it supposable, think ye, that the Commands of him, who loved you so well, as to give himself to the Death for you, can ever be grievous ? Would he willingly impose upon us, or persuade us to any Thing that is not altogether reasonable ? or does not it rather follow hence, that his most afflicting Dispensations, his Rods and Stripes, and his very Frowns are all the Effect of Love ; and that, since 'tis our Redeemer who hath the ordering of them, they must all turn to our real Advantage ? And now, how amazing is it, that Men should rebel against such a Sovereign ? Is there any Thing in him that is frightful, that we should remove ourselves from him by our Iniquities ? and how shameful and base must Sin be, that is committed against such a compassionate and merciful Saviour ? Is it thus we requite our best Friend ? and are Affronts done to his Laws, and a Neglect of the great Salvation, a despising of his Grace, and a joyning with his Enemy the Devil, or even a cold Love, and lazy Services, the Returns we make to his endearing loving Kindness ? I am sure, every Groan of our dying Redeemer, and each Drop of his Blood, may raise a Blush in our Souls, may surprise us at our selves, that we should be so vile and unworthy ; and ought to make us fast and mourn, and pierce our Hearts, if they be not harder than the Adamant, when we think on our Abominations.

I shall here take occasion to answer two Objections against God and his Ways, which will e-

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minently conduce to shew, that *there is no Iniquity*
in him. To go on then;

4thly. Sinners are ready to excuse themselves from the exceeding Strictness of the divine Laws, and the insupportable Burden they lay upon Men; they require, that we should deny our dearest Lusts, *pluck out a right Eye, or cut off a right Hand*, and to mortify all our corrupt Inclinations, while, in the mean time, we have no Strength for such a Work, but are under the Dominion of Corruption, and are utterly unable to perform what is required: And so think they find enough of Iniquity in God; when he orders them to struggle and bear up against a Stream, which carries them down whether they will or not; when he lays upon them such a heavy Weight, so disproportioned to the Strength of their Shoulders; when he makes it necessary for them to engage in a continued War against the most frightful Enemies, the World, the Devil and the Flesh, though he knows, and they find by Experience, that they are not able to grapple with the least of these numerous Adversaries. This was indeed the Iniquity which the rebellious *Israelites* found in God, and the Objection they made against their pressing forward to the promised Land; and the same Answer which was given to them may be applied to our Purpose. *Deut. i. 28, 29, 30. Whither shall we go up? our Brethren have discouraged our Heart, saying, The People is greater and taller than we, the Cities are great and walled up to Heaven; and moreover we have seen the Sons of the Anakims there. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you.* So in like Manner, let our Lusts be never so tall, and our spiritual Enemies never so
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formidable ; though we be weak and utterly insufficient to oppose the least of their Attempts, and bear up against prevailing Corruption : Yet it is no Iniquity in God to demand these Terms of us, since there are inexhausted Treasures of spiritual Strength and Fortitude laid up in *Messiah* our King ; who is as ready to enable us to perform our Duty, as to require it of us, he can put to Flight the Malice and Power of Hell, and make every one of his Followers Conquerors. So that we need no more but to be sensible of our Weakness, to give him the Glory of the Victories over our Lusts, humbly to acknowledge, that vain are our own Endeavours and the Help of Man, and in Sincerity to beg, that he would give Help from Trouble ; and then we will experience, that through God the weakest *Israelite* shall do valiantly : And I am sure, there can be no Iniquity found in him, when he commands us *to ask and we shall receive, to knock, and it shall be opened to us.* But

5thly. Sinners are apt to be frightened from Religion, and run far away from God, when they consider the Roughness of the Paths which they must tread, that there are many Tribulations in the Way to the Kingdom ; and that Self-denial, Sorrow, and the Cross, seem to be the Charms whereby Christ would allure Men to become his Disciples ; yea, Persecution and the cruellest Deaths must be resolved upon : But then consider, how shameful and inglorious must it be for us to make this Objection, hath not our Redeemer done and suffered infinitely more to make us happy, than he commands any to undergo for him ? Is it Iniquity in him to oblige us to forsake the World and its Enjoyments for his Names sake, when he left the

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the Glory of Heaven, and was crucified amongst
Thieves upon our account ? Or is it a hard Thing
for Soldiers to follow a General who leads them
on to the Fight with undaunted Courage, who is
so far from exposing them to Hazard, and return-
ing to a safe Post himself, that he stands in the Heat
and forest Part of the Battle, and in his own Per-
son sustains the fiercest Assaults of the Enemy :
Especially, when all he bids us do is to follow him,
and he'll fight and conquer, yea, he hath already
triumphed over Death and the Grave, the stoutest
Devils are the Trophies of his Victory ? And can
we in any Reason complain of so hard, wearisome
and dangerous a Service, as to resist broken Ene-
mies, scattered Foes ? But

I shall but just name in the *sixth* Place, what
will be enough to demonstrate that it is not possi-
ble for us to find any Iniquity in our God, and
that is the excellent Reward, that noble Salvation
which is the End of the Christian's Faith and La-
bours. It is a Happiness larger than all our Ex-
pectations, yea, our most raised and ambitious
Wishes, and as lasting as Immortality : For it
will be every way worthy of the infinite Love of
God, and of the unvaluable Blood and Obedience
of the Redeemer ; where we can desire nothing
but what will overflow us, for there is Fulness of
ravishing Joys, and Rivers of Pleasures will eter-
nally with an Excess of Satisfaction run through
every Part of our Souls ; where God will delight
to honour us ; and, if he that made us can make
his own Creatures blessed and contented, we shall
there be as full of Happiness as we can hold :
There Knowledge is without any Defect, no Dis-
pute nor Debate ; no Clouds and Storms, but e-
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very Thing clear and serene, and an everlasting Peace which nothing can disturb: And there God will *wipe away every Tear from our Eyes* with his own Hand; and we shall be united to a Body that is sown in Corruption, that it may be raised to Glory, and purified into a Fittedness for Heaven, where it shall be subject to no Disease nor Weakness, but be spiritual, quick and nimble as the Wind, and have an undiminished Vigour and Firmness: In a Word, where *God and the Lamb will themselves be a Crown of Glory, and a Diadem of Beauty unto our Souls.* And how is it possible that there can be any Iniquity in that God, who will reward us with such a noble Blessedness? Can any Difficulties or Dangers be too great to be undergone, that we may attain to this Kingdom? Do you think we should be weary of any Services and Labours, or complain of Hardships which may prepare us for the Inheritance of the Saints? Yea, are not all the Burdens God lays on us, the Tribulations and Afflictions, the subduing of our own Spirit, and the mortifying our dearest Lusts, light and easy, when compared with the *Weight of Glory* wherewith they shall be recompensed? And can there be any Iniquity found in his Conduct towards us, who raiseth us from the greatest of Miseries, and exalts us to Heaven the highest and most amiable Good?

Your Time will not allow me to speak to the other Thing proposed, *namely*, that Sin is the greatest Vanity; and that all who run far from God, and pursue sinful Pleasures, are indeed vain: I shall therefore conclude with a short Application of this Point. And,

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1. To such as have never pretended to embrace God and Religion, but entertain fixed Prejudices against them. Think seriously with your selves, what Answer you can give to this Question of God's, *What Iniquity have you found in me?* If you have really any sufficient Reasons for running far from him, think if it be not just, that since he is our Father we should honour him? And if it be any ways unreasonable, for the great Creator to require Service and Obedience from the Works which his own Fingers have made? Consider if it be not better to have him for a Friend than an irresistible Adversary? And if God does not advise us to our best Interest, when we are exhorted to flee from eternal Wrath, and lay hold of immortal Happiness? Or if we should be frighted from Religion, because we must deny our sinful Lusts and Delights, which are sordid and base, below the Dignity of our immortal Spirits, and which lead us to Death? Or if it be Iniquity in the Redeemer to require our losing all Things for his Name's sake, when he assures us that we shall reap an Hundred-fold, even eternal Life? Though Satan and our Corruptions may suggest many hard Things of the Laws of God, yet take a narrower Look of them, consider if they be not indeed all of them noble and lovely, suitable to the Dignity of our rational Natures, and tending to our Glory and Comfort, if we would but obey them? And surely *his Commandments are not grievous, for in keeping of them there is great Reward.* And then, if, after a mature unprejudiced Deliberation, you find that *there is no Iniquity in God*, as certainly you will, then be ashamed of your own Folly in running far
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away from him, and pursuing Vanity and Dreams; be sorrowful for your Ingratitude to so good a God, and your mistaken Notions of Religion, which is indeed the Ornament and Beauty of our Souls: Come to God, and acknowledge that you find no Iniquity in him; and then shew a Sense of these Things, by forsaking Vanity, and fleeing to this God and our Saviour. And,

2dly. Such of us as have professed to be Followers of Jesus, and have consecrated our Lives to his Praise, particularly by sitting down at his Table, and partaking of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, ought also, upon such a Fast-day as this, to be putting this Question to our selves, *What Iniquity we have found in our God?* If ever he hath given us cause to repent of our Vows, and change Sides? If he be not altogether lovely, and no Unrighteousness in him? And if any Defect of Comfort, Joy and Delight, is not to be laid intirely at our Door? And then let us compare what hath been discoursed concerning the infinite Amiableness of God, the Reasonableness of all his Ways, and the Arguments to prove that there is no Iniquity in him, with our Practice and Life since our last Engagements to him, and we shall find, that, if there be no Iniquity in him, there must be a great deal, and greatly aggravated, in us: We can have no Excuse, nothing to lessen or extenuate the Shame and Wickedness of our Unfaithfulness in his Covenant, which all of us are in some Measure guilty of. And this is what induced me chiefly to make Choice of this Subject upon this Occasion, because few Things will readier convince us of our Transgressions, and shew us

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our Guilt, than a serious asking at our selves
What Iniquity we find in God? Hence it will ap-
pear, that the smallest Sin is without Cloke, that
we can alledge nothing for removing in the least
Degree from him; that if he be infinitely amiable,
and every Thing about him alluring and lovely,
then not only open Sins, but the going after any
Thing else, the giving the least of our Hearts and
Love to the World or our own Lusts, must be
highly unreasonable, and it must be Iniquity in us
not to be still coming nearer and nearer to him,
till we love him with all our Strength and Soul,
and dwell in his Love. Let us then come before
God this Day, loaded with innumerable Provo-
cations, loathing our selves because of our Vileness
and Unworthiness, and humbly acknowledge that
there never was any the smallest Shadow of Ini-
quity in him, but that his Ways are all of them e-
qual, just and good; and that ours are unequal and
perverse.

I shall conclude this Discourse by naming these
three Things, which ought to follow upon our
Views that *there is no Iniquity in God.* And that
is,

1. Shame because of our ungrateful Returns to
the great Goodness of a God, that never gave us
the least Provocation to depart from him. Men
are ordinarily ashamed of a foolish, base, vile
Action: Now what greater Folly than to run
away from such a God, and follow Vanity? Or
what can be so monstrously base, as to rebel a-
gainst him to whom we ow our being out of Hell,
and who hath manifested Bowels of the tenderest
Compassion for us; not to love him who shed his
Blood

become vain who go far from him. 373

Blood for us, or to be cold in our Affection, or lazy in his Service? This is the most disgraceful and horrid Ingratitude, and it certainly becomes us, when we look upon our Redeemer and the great Things he hath wrought for us, these Miracles of Grace and Love, to hide our Faces in the Dust, blush and be confounded, and, with *Ezra*, to cry out, *Ezra ix. 6. O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my Face to thee, my God; for our Iniquities are increased over our Head, and our Trespass is grown up unto the Heavens.* We have particular Reason to be ashamed and to blush, who are baptized into the Name of Christ, and have afterwards given our own Consent to the Covenant, by sitting down at the Lord's Supper; then we mixed our selves with the Armies of *Israel*, and swore to be faithful to the Captain of our Salvation, so that Sin in us is not only Rebellion and Ingratitude, but Perjury and the vilest Treachery: Every Transgression of ours is loaded with the Guilt, Disgrace and Horror of a Thousand Oaths, violated and broken, and covered over with the basest Perfidy: We are infamous like Soldiers who betray their General, and run over to the Enemy's Camp. And, there being no Iniquity found in God, nothing on his Part to excuse our departing from him, raises our Crimes and Reproach, and so it should our Blushing and Humiliation to the greatest Height.

2^{dly}. Sorrow because of our many Provocations. To weep and mourn bitterly, that by our Backslidings we should pierce him who loved us and gave himself for us, and that we have

374 *There is no Iniquity in God, &c.*

so oft trampled upon that precious Blood which was shed to save us: Let it be the greatest Grief and Affliction of our Lives, that, when we or our Fathers never found any Iniquity in God, he should find so much Iniquity, and Ingratitude, and Treachery in us. * * * *



S E R-



S E R M O N XVI.

ECCLES. xii. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Tears draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.*



THE eternal God, is so infinitely worthy of our highest Love, and most ardent Affections, the Glories of his most amiable Excellencies, shine with so bright and attractive a Lustre, and adorn all his Counsels and Providences, with the Beauties of Holiness, and the Endearments of endless Compassions, inviting Condescension, Patience never to be outwearied, and Grace victorious over all the mighty Opposition which the Distance, Vileness and Enmity of abandoned Sinners can make to it : That it would be impossible for us to shake off the Burden, or spurn at the Yoke laid upou us by such a Sovereign, to reject his Laws with Aversation, and treat himself with Indifference, or even cold and wavering Affections ; if we knew how lovely he

is, and did not live in an amazing Ignorance of his Glory, and the Terrors of an infinite Greatness, of an Enemy at once irresistible and everlasting, in whose Quiver are all the Arrows of Death, not temporal only, but dipped in the Poison and Flames of Hell, which they carry alongst with them into the fearful Soul, are so inconceivably terrible, that 'tis only a thoughtless Folly and stupid Inconsideration, could ever make Men so mad as to venture upon his Displeasure, or live without an awful Regard of his Greatness. An utter Ignorance then of that almighty Being, or, while hot in the Pursuit of sinful Pleasures, an inconsiderate Forgetfulness of him, being of such fatal Consequence, by supporting Satan's Throne in the Hearts of Men, and promoting the Interests of Impiety in their Lives; the *remembering of our Creator*, must carry alongst with it proportionally as noble Advantages in the Ways of Religion, and be of the greatest Importance to a well-ordered Conversation, which will make it an useful Subject of our present Meditation.

That I may save as much of your Time for this Purpose as may be, I shall take up very little of it, in speaking to general Considerations which relate to this excellent Book of *Ecclesiastes*, or the Circumstances and Design of its Composition. That great wise Man having from the thoroughest Experience and accuratest Trials, that the most advantageous Circumstances ever a Mortal was placed in could afford him, in the former Part of this Book, feelingly demonstrated the Vanity of temporal Grandeur and Pleasure, the Vexation which embitters all the Sweets of a perishing Life, and makes its Way into the Souls of the richest and most powerful

erful ; those Cares and Discontents, and still unsatisfied Wishes, which no Character can secure from, or the deepest Politicks provide against their creeping into the Mind, and their fretting and disturbing it ; and then, the melancholy Disappointments which in the End blast all the Variety of Projects, whereby ambitious or voluptuous, or covetous or political Fools, seek after Happiness and Satisfaction in the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Life : The wise *Solomon*, I say, having discoursed of so many moving Things concerning the vain Conversation of Men, in the last *Chapter* of his Book, which my Text begins, points out to his Readers, an Employment that would be attended with none of the former Inconveniencies or Disappointments, but had all the opposite Advantages to recommend it, *namely*, serious Religion and the Service of God, *Remember thy Creator.*

In which Words we may take notice of these three Things. 1. We have a Duty which the wise Man exhorts us to be employed about, *remembering our Creator* : Whereby is meant, that we endeavour to beget and preserve upon our Minds a lively and awful Sense of the supreme Being ; and never to be forgetful of the Benefits wherewith he loads us, but to have deeply impressed on our Thoughts, and ever before our Eyes, all the mighty Obligations which a *Creator* comprehends ; to carry alongst with us in all our Aims and Managements, the influencing Sense of the Relation we stand under to our almighty Maker, and how powerfully and universally such a Character ought to move and determine us. And as this Frame of Spirit, and a solemn Aw of God upon our Souls, is of very great Effect as to all the Parts of a Christian's
Con-

Converſation ; ſo by this Phraſe the Whole of Religion in general may be expreſſed : Tho', no doubt, a particular Reſpect is had to the ſpecial Duty direſtly mentioned. God is here repreſented under the Notion of a *Creator*, becauſe that founded his Authority, and claimed their dutiful Obedience, and was the Character which ought to be one of the chief Subjects of Remembrance ; eſpecially when under the Law, the more lovely and endearing Glories of a Captain of Salvation were not ſo clearly diſcovered to the Church : Which being now *brought to Light in the Goſpel*, the wiſe Man's Advice, as directed to us, muſt certainly regard a Redeemer's Love as much as a Creator's Goodneſs ; ſo that now he ſpeaks to us, *Remember thy Creator*, thy Father, thy Saviour.

2dly. We have the Period during which this Work ſhould chiefly be performed, *in the Days of thy Youth* : Not as if any Age of Life were free from this Obligation, or any Time unſeaſonable for ſo noble an Employment : No, Religion ſhould be the Ornament of gray Hairs, as well as the Honour of a blooming Life, a lively Senſe of God ſhould be carried through all the Periods of Age ; and when the feeble Memory of a drooping old Man is incapable of receiving new Impreſſions, and former ones are daily effaced, the Remembrance of thy Creator ſhould ſurvive every other Thought, and deſcend with us to the Grave : But the wiſe Man, by this Expreſſion, ſhews us, that as no Time is too early and ſoon for Religion, ſo the Season of Youth hath a great many Advantages in ſetting about this Work ; when the Faculties are ſtrong and lively, and the young Man enjoys the Vigour and Edge of the moſt ſprightly and active Days ;
when

when the Sense of Pleasure is keenest, and the Soul not so much prepossessed by other Objects; then the Remembrance of our Creator will be attended with the most lasting and diffusive Usefulness, and and at the same Time prove easiest to our selves, and most acceptable to God.

3dly. In the Text we have an Argument to persuade the earliest Youth to devote their first Days to God, and employ the growing Buds of Reason and Strength in the Remembrance of him, taken from the Inconveniencies of old Age, and its melancholy Unfitness for that Work which should have been the Labour of Youth. *While the evil Days come not, &c.*

What may be necessary for further illustrating these Phrases, may be mentioned in the Progress of the Discourse. Among the many Heads this Text might give me occasion to speak upon, I shall, through the divine Assistance, endeavour only to do these three Things. 1. I shall in some Instances open up the Nature of this Duty, *Remembring of our Creator.* 2dly. I shall speak a little to what the wise Man recommends as the properest Season for us. 3dly. I may draw some practical Inferences.

I begin with the first, *namely*, to open up in some Instances the Nature of this Duty, *Remembring our Creator*: And, because your Time will not allow me to shew the Reasonableness thereof, and press it home upon you in a separate Head; I shall intermix some Reflections to this Purpose as I go along.

First then, *Remembring of our Creator* supposes, and very intimately includes, that we have been, and are at due Pains and Diligence to attain suitable

able Notions of him, and make Advances in the Knowledge of his Nature and glorious Excellencies; that, by serious Enquiry and attentive Views, we have fixed our selves in a deep Perswasion of his infinite Greatness and eternal Dominion, the Aw of his Majesty, and the alluring Condescension of his Grace; that we believe him to be the best and the greatest of Beings, that he is possessed of every Excellency that may beget the humblest Reverence and Adoration, and yet stir up Love, and kindle all our Affections. To remember him aright, we must first know his Laws, study his Testimonies, and become acquainted with all the Steps of those Ways in which he is to be found or served. And as the great Design of this Knowledge terminates upon Practice, and must influence and govern our Lives, so it will not suffice that we study God and Religion, (which I am afraid the most of the wise and learned do) only as an Entertainment to our Curiosity, and an Improvement of our Understandings like human Sciences; this will be of no Efficacy to the curbing of our Lusts, and such Notions will either be quite eclipsed, or, at least, clouded and weakned by every Temptation: We must therefore, in order to perform the Duty in our Text, search after the Knowledge of God, as that which we are infinitely concerned in, and every Part whereof hath the nearest Relation to our Happiness. We must have the quick and lively Views of God and his Excellencies, as they are our Life, and Being, and Salvation, upon which our eternal All intirely depends, in which our greatest Interest lies. We are not to know God as Men do speculative Sciences, as they study History or learn Mathematicks to gratify their Curiosity, the
Truth

Truth or Falshood whereof will make no Alteration in their State : But we must view the divine Goodness as the Joy of our Souls, his Mercy as our only Refuge, his kind Providence as the safest Guard from Danger and the sweetest Comfort in a false and changeable World : We must know his Laws as the sovereign Rule of Life, by which our unalterable State will be finally determined ; his Threatnings and Promises as surer than the Foundations of the Mountains, of the Stability whereof our Souls cannot miss to feel either the joyful or tormenting Experience, at the End of Things : In a Word, we must know God as our Creator, whose our Lives and Beings are ; as our King, who has the justest Authority to govern us, and whose infinite Right is supported by an equal Power ; as the most dangerous Enemy or valuable Friend, in whose pure and piercing Eyes the least of our Actions or Thoughts is either provoking or acceptable. Such steady and deep-rooted Thoughts of God, and of the Relation he bears to us, are one great Consideration in explaining this Duty of *remembering* of him, and is that good Knowledge of the Lord whereby we may escape the Pollutions of the World.

And what, my Friends, merits so deep an Impression on our Minds, or is so worthy of our Enquiry and Meditation, as all the adorable Perfections of your Maker ; the Beauties whereof are gazed at by the Crowds of admiring Angels, and both amaze and delight the Eye of a Seraph, whose exalted Understandings so industriously pry into them, and glory in attaining to the Knowledge of a small Portion thereof, while they despise other Objects, about which foolish Men are so solicitous,

citous, as too little and mean for them. What so suitable to the Meditation of an immortal Mind, as the divine Wisdom and Art, which our own Souls and Bodies with every Thing round us proclaim with so loud and distinct a Voice; as those noble Contrivances of endless Compassions and a Redeemer's Grace, the Glories whereof will outlive the Grave, and spread themselves over all the immense Regions of Eternity, when the little Objects, that the Understandings of the greatest Part converse with, will be turned into Nothing and Vanity? Is any Thing so worthy of our Study, as all the Labours of that mighty Love, and the Victories of the Captain of our Salvation over the scattered Legions of Darkness, with all the wonderful Methods that accomplish the Designs of his Kingdom? These are Truths so vast and noble, that they at the same Time fill and enlarge our Capacity, they purify our Reason and perfect it, and all of them, belonging to that eternal God, who is infinitely greater and better than any of his Creatures, ought to be the chiefest Subject of their Views and Enquiries.

And, indeed, when there are such numberless Excellencies in God and his Ways to entertain and exalt our Reason, what a fatal Proof of the Degeneracy of a corrupt Age must it be, that so few make these the Object of their Search, and many, abundantly vain of their Learning and Wit, are so little acquainted with their Maker, and the glorious Things that in Scripture are spoken of him? An Understanding of divine Things is so far from having sunk down into their Hearts, and made lasting Impressions there, that it hath not so much as got up into their Heads; nor have they attained
even

even a speculative Knowledge of God : Tho' one would think, that, whatever Studies are necessary to train up a Person for the Business of this World, or to distinguish him by uncommon Abilities in it, some more Acquaintance with a Maker and a Saviour were no unfit Ornament to the Character of a Creature, much more of a Christian.

But, how anxiously soever others spend their inquiring Thoughts about many Things, do thou, O my Soul, learn chiefly to know thy God who is thy Creator, and the Rock of thy Salvation. Let the Views of his excellent Glories be the principal Ornament of thy Understanding ; and let all these amiable Wonders of powerful Love, which shine with so bright a Light in the Gospel of his Son, be the most joyful Entertainment of thy Mind, and have the most fixed Abode there : While others labour that they may pierce into the Knowledge of Things which are vain and transitory ; and be skilled in all the Arts of curing a Disease and preserving a frail Body, which the common State of Mortality will in a little Time baffle, when it reduces the decayed Habitation of Clay to its original Dust. Do thou, O my Soul, fix thy Contemplations upon that Kingdom of God which is beautified by the Lustre of an eternal Excellency ; search into its Pleasures and Glories, and the Way to attain them ; make thy immortal, never-dying Soul, thy Study, and learn the Methods whereby a compassionate God heals the terrible Wound Sin hath given to it, and cures its lothsom and fatal Disease : While, amongst *the Scribes, the Wise and the Disputers*, some are busied about angry or cavilling Questions, others bend all their Thoughts into the Intricacies of the Laws, that, it may be,

go-

govern a short-lived Empire, and are established by Mortals whose Death or changeable Humours often annul and take away their Being, and at best regulate and secure to Men perishing Riches, and airy Honours, and with the other Branches of what is so unworthily nicknamed Property, which belong not to an immortal Soul, and are only the Possession of the Body. Let us meditate Day and Night upon these eternal Testimonies which govern our Spirits, and extend their Power through the endless Ages: These divine Statutes which will make us wiser than the skilfullest Counsellors, and by which, not our Title to a little Earth, but to an everlasting Heaven, or an unquenchable Hell must be determined. Thus then, he that would *remember his Creator*, must endeavour to attain to a due Acquaintance with God and Religion, and have deep Impressions of these noble and important Truths made upon his Mind; for as it is, *John xvii. 3. This is Life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

2dly. Remembring God includes our frequent reflecting upon his glorious Excellencies, and daily meditating with Joy on all the Miracles of Grace he hath wrought for us; and that we lose no Opportunity of calling to mind those admirable Obligations, whereby he hath endeared himself and Service to our Souls; when the tender Mercies of our God are both the serious Business of our Thoughts, in all proper Seasons peculiarly set apart to this Purpose, and also habitually the Entertainment of our Minds and ever before our Eyes: And that, with the Psalmist, *Psal. civ. 34. Our Meditation of him may be sweet, and we may be glad*

in the Lord. The Nobleness of which Objects, and the plainest Ties of Gratitude should make us comply with *David's* Exhortation, *1 Chron. xvi. 12, 13. Remember his marvellous Works that he hath done, his Wonders, and the Judgments of his Mouth, O ye Seed of Israel his Servant, ye Children of Jacob his chosen ones.* And this seems to be particularly designed in the Character under which the wise Man mentions God, *Remember thy Creator.* Let this then be the habitual Subject of your attentive Thoughts, and call it frequently to Mind, that *he is the Lord your Maker,* to the Word of whose Power you owe your Beings; no Circumstance of which, but should engage us to glorify him, in whose Hands are our Life and Breath: It was he who shaped you in your Mother's Womb, and preserved you in helpless Infancy by his tender fatherly Care; whose Hand sets all the Wheels and Springs of this curious Machine, our Bodies, in Motion, and maintains them in so admirable a Regularity; who *upholds our Souls in Life, and keeps our Feet from falling.*

Bring often to your Remembrance all the Goodness and Bounties of his Providence, the Comforts which he hath bestowed, and the Dangers and Diseases he hath preserved us from; and then with fervent Affections and enlivened Thoughts, stir up and enlarge all the Powers of your Memory and Understanding, that you may often receive as much as you can contain of the grateful Remembrance of him, who, being originally your Creator, became your Husband and Saviour. Think on the overflowing Springs of that mighty Grace, which gave Rise to all the glorious Things that are celebrated to the Praise of redeeming Love,

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with which the Memories of Angels are stored, and their unwearied Sight delighted. Set often before your Eyes these innumerable Transgressions which once compassed you about, but now pardoned and washed away in his Blood; the ravishing Delights of Immortality, which are the Fruits of his Purchase; and the King of Terrors in all his gasty Looks and formidable Attendance, disarmed of his Sting by him who abolished Death: And look at the raging Flames of Hell's Fire extinguished to all his Followers. These are a Part of the delightful Subjects, which a Rememberer of his Creator should be frequently and daily meditating on: But oh, the base Degeneracy of Man! who is so soon *forgetful of all his Benefits*, who is *unmindful of the Rock that begat him, and of God that formed him*; and can so monstrously pervert that which is right, as to allow no Share, or so very faint Impressions on his Memory, to him who was the Giver of it, and, as he is the Author of Nature, enables us alone to call any Thing back to our Remembrance. Man now is so ingloriously fallen from his Dignity and Reason, as to banish these eternal and lovely Excellencies from his Memory, while it is filled with a Crowd of impure Imaginations, or is lost in a Throng of Deceits and Vanities that cannot profit. And art thou, O my Soul, become so poor and disgraceful? Think once on the Matter, and resolve, if thou canst find in thy Heart, to forget thy affectionate Lord, who remembered thee in thy low Estate; or to think with so slight an Attention upon him, who, now appearing as a Lamb slain, surrounded by all the alluring Endearments of his tender Mercies, and the dying Love of his Blood, and yet, when

when in the midst of the Throne, is encompassed about with all the heavenly Pomp, and Majesty and Power of an eternal King: And so his Greatness and thy Gratitude conspire to keep him ever in our Memory, especially when neither our Baseness, nor Distance, nor Aversation, the Shame and Pain of the Cross, the Opposition of Hell, nor the Wrath of his Father, could blot out the deep Impressions our perishing Souls, when going down to an eternal Grave, made upon a Redeemer's Memory and Love, but then he came to seek and save us. And what ought we so often to call to Remembrance, as that Mercy and Goodness which is all our Joy in a vain and changeable World, the Scene of Sin and Imperfection; and those Regions of Felicity, where are all our great Expectations; and the Excellencies of the Laws, the Counsels and Ways of that almighty King, which will ever imploy the pleasing Meditation of Saints and Angels, while Eternity will not cloy or outweary them? But how often soever the World, with its vain Business and dying Projects, and how seldom God or Religion, be in the Memories of the most Part, let us resolve with *Asaph*, *Psal. lxxvij. 11, 12. I will remember the Works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy Wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy Works, and talk of thy Doings.* And with the Church, *Song i. 4. We will remember thy Love more than Wine.*

3dly. The chief Thing in the Remembrance of our Creator, and of the greatest Importance, is that we carry that Knowledge, and these Meditations I have mentioned, alongst with us in all the Actions of our Life; and consider what Influence they ought to have thereon: An awful Sense

of God would then be of great Use to a well-ordered Conversation. I told you that our Remembrance of God, when aright, ever tends to Practice. It bath the nearest Connection with our Interest and Duty, and therefore should ever be applied by us to the whole Employment of Life: So that when we desire any Thing with Vehemency, and pursue it diligently, we are to call to mind our Creator, and see if it be consistent with what we owe him, and, if it will be acceptable to him: When we form any Schemes of Business, and set about the smallest Project, the first Question a Rememberer of him must put, will be, what God thinks of it? and how he will judge concerning it, whose Sentence can only determine its eternal Wisdom or Folly? For he carries about with him the Conviction that his Creator pries into his most secret Actions, that *his Eyes are upon the Ways of Man, and that he pondereth all his Goings*. And therefore, when tempted by deceitful Gain, by Honours and Greatness to be exchanged for a good Conscience, and by Pleasures inconsistent with the Purity of a Christian's Life, he then remembers that by complying with the Solicitations of Lust, Ambition or Covetousness, he provokes the Anger of an almighty Enemy, and exposes his Soul to the raging Billows of an Ocean of Brimstone and Flame; and considers if the Offers made by the World, are worth the While of running the Hazard of Hell's Torments, and the Vengeance of him that created all Things; the Thoughts whereof will soon extinguish the Fire of Lust, and make him disdain the fearful Proposal. Thus Joseph called to mind his Creator, *Gen. xxxix. 9.* when enticed by the Arts of his whorish Mistress, he cries out,
How

How then can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?

When one's foolish Vanity, or, it may be, distinguishing Accomplishments, are apt to swell his Pride, then the Remembrance of a Creator's Greatness, *before which we are all as nothing*, presently humbles and abases him. To remember God, is suitably to apply his Perfections to all our Circumstances, so that, for Example, in Affliction, the Thoughts of his Sovereignty and fatherly Chastisements may stifle every repining Murmur, and engage to a cheerful Submission: In Prosperity, the Views of a Creator, as the Fountain of every good Thing, may inspire our Songs with Gratitude, and fill our Lives with thankful Obedience and Acknowledgments: In the midst of the most terrible Confusions and distracting Fears, to call to mind the overruling Providence of our Maker, will compose our Spirits, and make us rest in Hope; for since the King of Zion reigneth throughout all Generations, on him alone should lean our Dependence and Expectation. In a Word, for I cannot insist on Particulars, to remember our Creator, is to consider all our Actions, Desires and Aims in a relation to him; to have ever God in our Thoughts, and to regulate all our Projects and Schemes by his Laws and Excellencies: Upon every Attempt we set about, and in special when surrounded by enticing Corruptions, and the flattering Sins which easily beset us, let us hearken to the Advice which God gives to *Israel*, when reproving them for Idolatry, *Isa. xlvi. 8, 9, 10. Remember this and shew your selves Men, bring it again to Mind, O ye Transgressors. Remember the former Things of old, for I am God, and there is none else.*

My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure ; that so his Majesty and Greatness may ever awe our Minds, curb our Passions, and influence our Lives. But,

4thly. That we may improve the Thoughts of God to such Purposes, we must ever have the Remembrance of him so fresh and lively, that it may be constantly at our Hand, and ready to be brought into our Minds at the first Occasion. We are encompassed about by the Snares of a beguiling World ; Satan catches every Occasion of stealing in a Temptation, when he sees at any Time *the Remembrance of our Creator* laid aside by us ; and when once Sin gets into our Heart, or even into our Ear, it clouds and darkens divine Things, and leads us further off from the Thoughts of God, till by the Deceitfulness thereof we be carried down the Stream, and have yielded to Vanity : It is not easie then effectually to call back the Prospect of God and his Greatness, when once a Temptation gets but a deliberate Audience of us ; and, I believe, woful Experience may convince us all how many Follies we have thoughtlessly indulged, how many Duties neglected, which, perhaps, we would have escaped, had we called to Remembrance our Creator when first attacked by that hellish Enemy. We should therefore have our whole Souls so intimately possess'd by the glorious Majesty and alluring Amiability of God, by the enlivening Comforts of his Love, and the Terrors of his Anger : That Satan may be no readier to throw his fiery Darts at us, or disguise a beastly Lust with all the false Beauties and deceitful Features of Sin ; than we should be instantly to oppose unto these cunning Arts of his, the Aw of an infinite

finite God, and of an eternal Hell, the strong Obligations we are under to obey him, and the great Reward of them who keep his Commandments. And, that we may have thus the Thoughts of our Creator always ready and never out of the Way, we ought to familiarize them to our Minds by frequent and deep Meditation, and by an attentive Consideration of all these Creatures and Providences which may lead us to God; and then depend by a humble Confidence and earnest Desire upon the holy Spirit, in the Words of *David*, *I Chron. xxix. 18.* That he may keep all these Things for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of our Heart, and prepare our Hearts unto him.

I should come now to the Second Head, *namely*, that Period which the wise Man mentions as the properest Season for Religion, and to this Duty particularly, *the Days of our Youth*: But, your Time being much spent, I can only hint at a few Things of many that might have been largely spoken to. And I need scarce observe in the Beginning, that what may be said on this Subject, tho' it directly respect the younger Hearers, yet it is of equal Use to Persons of whatsoever Age; since the longer we have delayed, we should with the more vigorous Endeavours lay hold on the golden Season of present Opportunity, and, if we have postponed our most important Business till old Age, we should then flee the swifter for Refuge to the Hope set before us.

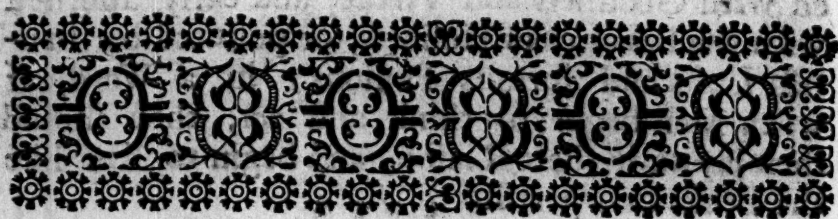
1. Then, Youth being undoubtedly the most flourishing and active Season, when all the Faculties are in their Prime, and every Thing most valuable, that blooming Spring of Age ought

consequently to be devoted to the Remembrance of our Creator, and the Practice of Religion: Because these are the infinitely noblest Entertainments, no other Object can pretend to equal their Excellency, and rival them in our Thoughts; and, as the Glories of a Maker and a Redeemer can never be all known or remembred, even during the eternal Youth of a Cherub or Seraph, it must be certainly reasonable, that, when our Understandings are most capacious and the Memory strongest, we should open them to receive these ravishing Objects, and entertain the Impressions of that mighty Grace which overflows all the Regions of Heaven and their Inhabitants; and when our Affections are animated by the noblest Warmth and Heat, that then they should be kindled with a divine Love, and our most vigorous Desires should be raised towards the Rivers of endless Pleasures; in a Word, that our freshest and best Days should be spent in the most lasting and exalted Employment. And, indeed, this is so infinitely plain an Argument, that I. may refer it to Children of the tenderest Youth, if they'll give their first Fruits to the Devil, who hates them with the Malice and Envy of Hell, and to those Lusts which are the Disgrace and Poison of a Soul; or if they'll rather bestow them upon God their Maker, the Lover of their Souls, their tender Father and compassionate Redeemer: Whether it be reasonable, that the Vigour of an immortal Spirit should be employed about Eternity and its incomparable Blessings, or basely prostituted to the disguised Nothings of an unsatisfying World; if they'd choose to have their tender Memories and Minds season-

ed with Goodness and Virtue, and early adorned with the Beauties of Holiness, or polluted by brutish Lusts and furious Passions; in a Word, if when Men begin to think and act, they should then lay aside their Reason, and begin to live like the Beasts that perish. * * * *



S E R-



S E R M O N XVII.

PSALMS XC. II. *Who knoweth the Power of thine Anger? even according to thy Fear, so is thy Wrath.*



LT is one of the melancholy Effects of the Rebellion of Man against God his Maker, that our immortal Spirits are become disgraceful Slaves to the Body; and we are sunk so deep into the Mire of Sin and Sense, and our Understanding so weakned and clouded by the Vanities of Things which are temporal, that outward Objects, which strike our Fancy and Senses most, have the greatest Influence both upon our Hope and Fear. And thus, as foolish Man flatters himself into the Prospect of finding Happiness, and seeks to be satisfied with Good in the deceitful Charms of Sin, and the perishing Enjoyments of a vain World; in like Manner also, we are afraid of great and powerful Men, who can render us uneasie while here below, torture our Bodies, or cut short our Days by the Hand of Violence.

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We dread them who can rob us of our Possessions, confine us to a Prison, and banish us from our Country and Friends, or by any other Means disturb our Quiet, and harm our Interests that are upon Earth. The Anger of such we entertain high enough Notions of, and are solicitous to avoid, and will not readily provoke them to Hatred and Revenge; while alas we little mind him who is clothed with infinitely greater Terrors than they, whose Power extends incomparably farther, even in this Life, and who, after he has driven us out of this World, can pursue with Vengeance beyond Death and the Grave; and are at no Care to please him, but stupidly insult the Honours of his Government, and contemn his Laws, as if we had nothing to fear from our Maker, or he were incapable to afflict us so much as our Fellow-creatures, or as if we were *able to contend with the Almighty, and our Hearts could endure, or our Hands be strong in the Day when he hath to do with us.*

As it is of the utmost Importance to us, that we no more abandon our selves to this Extremity of Madness; it is my Purpose at this Time, by the Assistance of God's wise and holy Spirit, to offer a few Considerations from this devout Meditation of the holy Psalmist in our Text, which may be useful to convince us that God is the most dreadful Enemy, and his Displeasure infinitely more to be feared than that of the greatest Men: To shew, that *when his Wrath is kindled but a little*, it is even then incomparably more terrible than the keenest Fury and fiercest Anger of any Creatures; and that when it burns against Transgressors, as it will do in the other World, with a vehement Flame, none can conceive how great the Power of it is:
And

And so from these Considerations, I shall endeavour to perswade you, that this Man hath the truest Understanding, who with the utmost Carefulness shuns whatsoever may offend such a terrible God, is frightened from Sin which exposes to his Wrath, as of all others the most dangerous Enemy, and filled with the greatest Terrors to our Souls: And that to order our Conversation in all Things, so as we may be in good Terms with our omnipotent Maker, be happy in his *Favour*, which is better than Life, and be delivered from the Power of his Anger burning against us, must be indeed the only Way of numbring our Days, so as to apply our Hearts unto real and lasting Wisdom. For which Purpose, I have made choice of the Words now read as the Subject of the following Discourse, *who knoweth the Power of thine Anger*; to the explaining of which I shall come as soon as may be, and not take up much of your Time in the Consideration of the Context.

This Psalm, which, as the Title assures us, was a Prayer of *Moses*, that eminently distinguished Man of God, seems to have been composed by him, when meditating upon the melancholy Circumstances of the *Israelites*, whom God, justly provoked by their Ingratitude and Unbelief, had condemned, by an irrecoverable Sentence, to wander in the vast howling Wilderness forty Years, and there to be consumed by the doleful Variety of Calamities and Afflictions wherewith God visited them, so that all that numerous Generation, save the Two ye know that were excepted from the Sentence, should perish there without any of them having Access to the promised *Canaan*, that so much desired Object of *Israel's* Hope. And, beside
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what particularly respects this sad State of that People, he takes Occasion thence to mention some very useful and affecting Considerations, relating to the great Uncertainty and Shortness of human Life in general, and the numerous Vanities and Miseries it was filled with while it lasted; of which Kind, what we have in the Verse preceeding our Text seems to be: The Days of a Man's Continuance upon Earth, says he, at the utmost, are bounded by *fourscore Years*; and what is that to a Being which must last to Eternity? *it is indeed soon cut off, and we flee away*; besides the few, the Thread of whose Life is drawn out to so uncommon a Length, lose much of the Relish and Pleasure of their later Years, they being attended with the melancholy Companions of *Labour and Sorrow*.

And then follows our Text, *who knoweth the Power of thine Anger?* Of which Words some take this to be the Meaning, *namely*, that notwithstanding of such awful Instances of divine Wrath as he had been speaking of, yet none seriously considered his *Anger* as they ought to have done, or improved these Meditations suitably by making this God their Fear and Dread. But though this is always just Matter of our Complaint, that as stupid Sinners are not allured to the Service of God, by the endearing Arguments of his infinite Love and Compassion still overflowing Mankind; so they inconsiderately *rush on the thick Bosses of his Buckler*, and are little affected by the Terribleness of his Displeasure: Yet I think the immediate Design of the Psalmist, is not so much to complain of the Thoughtlessness of Men, as to express the inconceivable Power of the Anger of a God, and that
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it vastly exceeds our highest Apprehensions of it. He had been meditating upon the affecting Case of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, and the various Judgments and heavy Strokes they were exposed to, while they were there consumed by God's Anger, and his Wrath troubled them. Now, as these Calamities, however frightful, were yet but small Beginings of the divine Wrath, he takes Occasion thence to ask the Question, how inconceivable must the Strength and Fierceness of it be? As if he had laid, to use the Apostle's Phrase upon another Occasion, if the *Weakness of God*, the first Efforts of his Wrath, so much amaze and fright us; then *who can know the Power of his Anger*, when it exerts it self in its Vigour? And, if the Smokings of divine Displeasure upon Earth occasion such lamentable Effects, and be so noisom; then, how dreadful and terrible beyond all Comprehension must be the Fire of his Anger, when kindled into a vehement Flame, or, which is the same Thing, when it becomes the *Power of his Anger*?

I need not bring Examples of a Thing which is so plain from Scripture, and frequently used therein, *namely*, that Questions of this Nature, according to the different Circumstances of the Places, import a very strong Denial or Affirmation of the Thing: And thus the Words have the same Meaning as if the Psalmist had affirmed, that none *knoweth the Power of his Anger*. And indeed Expressions of this kind seem to me to be peculiarly beautiful and emphatical, for he refers the Matter, as it were, to their calmest Thoughts and utmost Attention, does not take them unprepared, but allows them Time, and bids them thoroughly consider the Case, stretch their Imagination

nation and Thought, and see if they could find any *who knew the Power of God's Anger*, how terrible an Enemy he is. Who ever entred into the Treasures of Wrath and furious Storms, which he reserves for the Day of Battle; or is acquainted with the great Variety of the Arrows of Poison and Death which fill his Quiver, the Wounds whereof are always fatal and pierce deep into the Soul? Who can comprehend how terrible Miseries the Strength of such a right Arm, when animated by his Displeasure and Anger, can inflict; what ways it is able to torture a Creature, and with how vehement Flames the Power of divine Fury must rage? And, as I told you, the plain Import of the Question is, that it is unanswerable, none can conceive or imagine it: But, after we have framed the highest Notions of the most dreadful Wrath to our selves, and laid before our Thoughts the Extremity of Tortures and Woes, yet, all would be far short of *the Power of God's Anger*.

I need scarce tell you, what you so frequently hear, that we are not to imagine that *Anger* is here attributed to God, as if he were possessed by the least Degree of these irregular and changeable Passions which are found amongst Men: For the smallest Measure of Imperfection must be infinitely removed from the divine Nature; and, as he is in all Respects *without Variation or Shadow of changing*, there can never be any rising of a Passion, such as Anger, in his Breast at one Time, and a falling or lessening of it again, as is observed amongst Creatures. But his infinite Displeasure at Iniquity, his Abhorrence and Hatred of the Workers thereof, and the Fury of his Anger at them, are all
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suitable to the Purity and Glory of his Nature, perfectly steady and unchangeable: Which, nevertheless, is far from making his Wrath less real and dreadful, but this very Consideration, as I shall afterwards have occasion to observe, exceedingly aggravates the inconceivable Terribleness of divine Anger, *who knoweth the Power of thine Anger?* And then,

The Psalmist adds, *even according to thy Fear so is thy Wrath.* Some who think, as I formerly mentioned, that the Psalmist, in the Words which I have now explained, is lamenting the Inconsideration of thoughtless Sinners, and the Scarcity of those who meditate duly upon the Anger of God, give this as the Meaning of these Words, *namely, according to thy Fear, that is, in Proportion to the religious Reverence and Regard which Men have for thee, the Consideration and Knowledge of thy Wrath will be found with them, and the Impressions hereof remain upon their Souls; and because so few are truly good and have this Fear of God, therefore none knew and reflected upon the Power of his Anger.* But this Exposition seeming to be somewhat strained and incongruous,

Others generally think that these Words contain a very remarkable Difference, which is betwixt the Wrath of God and that of Creatures, *namely,* that we are very apt to fancy the Anger of Men much more terrible than it truly is in it self, we paint it in too frightful Colours, and are ready to be filled with anxious Fears of it; whereas indeed all the Calamities and Losses which the greatest Men can occasion to us, are but light Afflictions, their Strength reacheth but a little Way, and is soon at an End; the breaking of the Vapour of his

his Life, in a Moment blows into nothing all the Rage and the Anger of the most powerful Monarch : So that the Fear of Men, with the Generality, much exceeds the Strength and Power of their Wrath. But with respect to God it is infinitely otherwise, *thy Wrath*, says *Moses*, is in it self, and will be found to be so by the miserable Objects of it in that accursed Habitation of divine Fury, according to *thy Fear*, as great and terrible as the highest Apprehensions ever Man could entertain of it. None ever thought this Wrath more dreadful than it will be found to be, or fancied the Terrors of it greater than they are: But let a Man heighten his fearful Notions of them to the utmost Reach of his Imagination, and dread them never so much, still God's Wrath will be equal to the Fear of it, yea, infinitely exceed it.

Other Explications, agreeable enough to the Nature and Design of this Expression, might perhaps be mentioned: But because this would take up too much of your Time; and that the first Part of these Words, *who knoweth the Power of thine Anger*, is what I purpose a little to discourse upon, I shall not insist farther upon this Subject.

You see that the obvious Doctrine of the Text, which I have in some Measure explained, is, that the inconceivable Dreadfulness of God's Displeasure, and the infinite Power and unbounded Extent of his Anger, make him of all others the most formidable Enemy, and wholly swallow up the Dread of the greatest Creatures, and ought to engage us, as it is *Deut. xxviii. 58. to fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord our God*. In discoursing a little on this Subject, I shall endeavour to do these two Things.

1. I shall shew from several Considerations that the Displeasure of God is infinitely more to be dreaded than that of all others, that his Anger is inconceivably powerful, and that we can never entertain too frightful Notions thereof.

2dly. I shall in some Instances shew the Influence that the Meditation hereof ought to have upon our Souls, by drawing a few practical Inferences from what may be said.

And to begin with the *first* of these, it is indeed but a very little of so awful a Subject that we can comprehend, and but a low Degree of the Dreadfulness of divine Vengeance can be represented; for, *who knoweth the Power of his Anger?* We cannot form a suitable Notion of an enraged God, or conceive what unbounded Power, stirred up and sharpened by infinite Displeasure at Sin and Hatred of the impenitent Transgressor, is able to do, and what Storms and Tortures the Anger of such a Being let loose upon a Soul will raise in it. Oh! we are too weak to fancy how dreadful it is, when God sets his Terrors in Aray, and leads them on to Battle against one of his Creatures: But yet we may know enough of them, to shew us our infinite Danger in provoking this Anger, and having the God of it for an Enemy; as much as should fright us from displeasing him, and dissipate into nothing the Fear of Men when it comes in Competition with that of God. And indeed we can cast our Eyes upon nothing about us, but what will afford us an Argument to this Purpose. If we look up to the Sun, Moon and Stars, these vast and glorious Bodies, what Apprehensions may we have of the enraged Power of that Arm, the Fingers whereof made and govern them all? And
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If we think on our Souls and Bodies, their different Faculties and Members which were so fearfully and wonderfully framed, how dreadful must the Wrath of their Maker appear, and the Torments wherewith he is able to fill the Work of his own Hands? And, in a Word, if we either meditate on the glorious Excellencies of the great Lord of the World, as they are in themselves; or upon the many particular Instances of the Strength of his right Arm; which he hath every where scattered abroad, they will all conspire in proving the Power of his Anger, and demonstrate the Reasonableness of the Prophet's Question, *Jerem. x. 6, 7. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy Name is great in Might. Who would not fear thee, O King of Nations? For to thee doth it appertain.*

But that I may give some more particular Views of the Power of God's Anger, and how terrible an Enemy he is; I shall shortly consider it in these two Respects. 1. In the diffusive Extent thereof to all our Interests and Concerns, this Power reaching every Part of us even in this Life. 2dly. In its unshaken Stability and eternal Duration in the other World, and the Power of this Anger's flaming with an undiminished Vigour in that World which is to come. And

1. With regard to this Life and its Concerns, they are absolutely at the Disposal of him who ruleth ever by his Power, and his Eyes behold the Nations: On him depends our temporal Prosperity and Happiness, the Loss of which makes us so afraid of Men in Power; and he can inflict upon us all the Miseries and Pains which we are liable to upon Earth. Consequently were these

the principal Arrows in his Quiver, yet, he could with them wound deeper than any of our Fellow-creatures, and so the Power of his Anger is greater than theirs, even in this respect. It is true, that this is but a small Consideration, if compared with the dreadful Efforts of his Wrath, when God's immediate Management will be more conspicuous in the future State: Yet, as frequently by the Goodness of his Providence he gives Success to the Endeavours of such as serve him, and a wise Observer of Things will not want Instances to persuade us, that Stedfastness in Religion and Honesty is the best Way to be crowned with Prosperity, and as it is, *Prov. xxii. 4. By Humility and the Fear of the Lord, are Riches and Honour, and Life*; so his Anger oftentimes shews it self in the inflicting even of temporal Judgments, and blasting the Hopes and Designs of those who seek to be rich or great by Wickedness.

How often hath God exposed the Folly of the Ambitious, who feared nothing but the Anger of their Prince, and the Contrivances of Men like themselves? by secretly baffling all their Counsels, and in a Moment confounding their wisest Devices? He hath, by the Interposition of an almighty, though unregarded and despised, Providence, curbed the Power of the victorious Tyrant, set Bounds to his Rage, and covered the Vanity and Pride of his Armies and Counsels with Disappointment and Disgrace.

As for the covetous Worldling, who causes Sleep to flee from his Eyes that he may increase Riches, which he hath made his Confidence, and minds only to secure and add to his Possessions; God's Anger can make his Gold to rust, and his Silver

to canker, and breed a Moth into his Treasures that will inevitably consume them. There is a noble Passage in *Job* to this Purpose, xx. 15, &c. where *Zophar*, speaking of the Transgressor, says, *He hath swallowed down Riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his Belly: He shall not see the Rivers, the Floods, the Brooks of Honey and Butter. That which he laboured for, shall he restore, and he shall not rejoyce therein: Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the Poor, because he hath violently taken away an House which he builded not.* And there is none of us, but, by an easy Observation of Providence, may find Ground to joyn our Testimony to *Job*, Chap. xxi. 17. *How oft is the Candle of the Wicked put out? And how oft cometh their Destruction upon them? God distributeth Sorrows in his Anger.* Yea, and God hath made Use of that very Dissimulation and Flattery, that Treachery and Cunning, in the Practice whereof the Transgressors prostituted their Souls to advance their temporal Interests, as the Instruments of his Displeasure, whereby he ruined their Wealth, and blowed into nothing their Prosperity.

In a Word, all the different outward Calamities and Miseries which we dread in this Life, are at God's Command, and he can send them as Messengers of his Anger to disquiet us. And then Death, one of his Servants, gives a finishing Stroke to all the little vain Business and imaginary Pleasures of his Enemies, blasts all their Hopes for ever, banishes their Happiness. Oh! how madly inconsiderate does he shew the Man to be, who is only afraid of his Fellow-creatures that must die like himself, and bends all his poor Thought and Contrivance to be rich or great in the World;

and never thinks on the Wrath of him, who can command him back to his Dust, and in that very Day make all his Thoughts perish, and tear him from the Embraces of his Riches or Honours?

And this Power of God's Anger is sure and irresistible. The strongest Empire, and the most cunning Wisdom, can be no Security against him *who hath the Keys of Hell and of Death*. The Monarch who hath made the World as a Wilderness, and destroyed the Inhabitants thereof, may flatter and boast himself in the Number of his Armies, the Discipline and Valour of his Soldiers, and the Artfulness of his Management, and say to himself *he sits as King and shall see no Sorrow*: But God can in a Moment send one of his Executioners, make a Gangrene or a Fever storm his Palaces, hurry him from his Kingdom and Glory, and at once *bring to the Grave his Pomp and the Noise of his Viols*. And, in a Word, the Gout, Gravel, or a Decay, with every other Disease, are irresistible Instruments of the Power of God's Anger, whereby he drives the lothsom miserable Souls of his Enemies from all their Enjoyments into the other World. So that upon his Favour even temporal Life depends, and *with him is the Measure of our Days*.

But, 2^{dly}. Even while we dwell here below, God can not only visit our Disobedience with the forementioned outward Afflictions; but his Anger can reach our Souls, and his poisoned Arrows pierce into the Bowels, and wound the Spirit of the Man. The mightiest and most cruel Tyrant, whose Anger we dread, can only torture the Body, *Hitherto can he go and no further, here are the Rage and Noise of his Billows stayed*; for he is not able to touch

touch the Soul or ruffle its Calm: But this is the Power of God's Anger while he afflicts the Body, he can raise more furious Storms within the Man, and shake the Soul with more dreadful Convulsions; and, when the Wisdom of his Providence thinks fit to endure his Enemies for some time wallowing in the midst of temporal Enjoyments, possessed of all the Instruments of Luxury and Pleasures, he is able to mix Gall with their Wine, put the Soul on the Rack, and fill them with Dissatisfaction and Anxiety; and, when he wounds the Spirit, all the Relish and Glory of outward Wealth and Honour flee away and cannot remove the inward Pain. This God, when angry, can rouse up an awaked Conscience, and, when he gives the Word, it will bring forth a Thousand fiery Serpents that will sting the proud Sinner, though at the same Time adored by his servile Flatterers: And, in the midst of his Pomp and seeming Happiness, it will make his Injustice, Oppressions and Pride severe Tormentors to him; and neither his publick Greatness and Splendor, nor his private Retirements, will be able to protect him from the Lashes of these Executioners: And Experience has sometimes demonstrated, that such Vipers, springing from the Womb of Conscience, have proved more severe and cruel than any Torment within the Reach of Man could be. So that you see, even in this World, God's Anger is much more terrible than the Fury of any Creature.

But alas! this is only the Beginning of Sorrows. Any Thing which God manifests of his Wrath here is but the easiest and least frightful of his Terrors, it is only some little of the Smoke of his Anger: But oh! in the other World, where its Flashes are

so violent and its Flames rage, *who knoweth the Power of his Anger.* It is not my Purpose to discourse at any length now upon that accursed Place, the Prison of the Damned and the Habitation of divine Fury, that Place where God glories in the Destruction of impenitent Sinners, and employs infinite Power to heighten their Misery ; where the Inhabitants ly down in the Flames, and dwell with everlasting Burnings ; and where all the Society is that of Devils and damned Spirits, and, which is infinitely more frightful, of an angry God, and a Conscience awakned by him ; and where a practical Answer is given to the Question, *who knoweth the Power of his Anger ?* I say, I design not to speak particularly upon these Terrors, both because of your Time, and that I had Occasion, some little Time ago, to discourse in another Place at large upon the particular Punishments of the Damned: I shall therefore, without insisting on what I then said, mention these *two or three* general Considerations, concerning the Anger of God with respect to the World which is to come, whereby we may be convinced that *none can know the Power of his Anger.* And

1. We may view the eternal Duration and the inexhausted Treasures of divine Wrath, the Evils and Afflictions we can be afraid of from our Fellow-creatures, how great soever, are soon at an End ; they can last only a few Moments during a short Life, and then the Power of our Adversaries for ever ceaseth ; the Hand of the mightiest King is too short to stretch it self into Eternity, and the Grave is a secure Sanctuary from his keenest Envy and Revenge : For then, as it is in *Job iii. 17, 19. There the Wicked cease from troubling, and there*
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the weary be at Rest : The small and great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master. But Death only enters us into God's more immediate Empire; and his Anger is so far then from being stifled or diminished, that it rages in its Strength, and is blown up into a more vigorous Flame, and Eternity can never abate its Vehemence : For the everlasting God will, from his own Treasures of Wrath, furnish the Fuel to make it burn without a Possibility of cooling. And this is, of all others, the most melancholy Consideration to the Enemies of God, which will banish the smallest Glimpse of Hope from them, and bring in its Place the Terrors of eternal Despair, and the stinging Assurance of the endless Nature of Torments that have God's Anger for their Source : This is a dreadful and undisputed Demonstration of the Power thereof, which will never weary in the Severity of its Lashes. O amazing Eternity ! boundless Duration ! how vast this Gulf ! how inconceivable the Abyss ! all our Thoughts and Labour are swallowed up and lost at the very Shore of it, and our highest Imagination can look no further than to its Beginning ; and surely then we can never know the Power of that Anger which pierces to the Bottom of it, and spreads it self through every Part of this immense Ocean : And can we calmly think of being at the same Time the miserable Objects of an infinitely intense and never ending Anger ? Oh how would all the vain Pomp and Shew of Riches and Honour, the Charms of Fame and Applause, and the Luxury of Pleasures, utterly disappear as disguised Nothings, if we would compare Time to Eternity, and the Advantages of Sin

with

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with the fearful Price of it; the enduring the Flames of such an Anger.

2dly. The inconceivable Power of God's Anger will appear from its unrestrained Extent. Mens Wrath can reach no further than the Body, but divine Anger hath Power over every Member of our Body and Faculty of our Soul, to make them Instruments of Wrath. This Anger raging in Hell; commands the Conscience and Understanding to whip the Sinner with the Lashes of his own tormenting Thoughts and gnawing Reflexions; the Memory obeys this Anger, and sets all the Man's Iniquities in Order before him, which prove so many Vipers and Scorpions, Instruments of Punishment; in a Word, it pierces through the whole Soul, all the Capacity of Suffering, to fill it with Torrents of unmixed Fury and Wrath, so that the Man can have no Retreat from this Anger, nor find the smallest Corner in his Spirit whither he may retire to find a Moment's Calm. And then,

3dly. It will appear that God's is an inconceivably powerful Anger, if we consider him with a Relation to all other Beings, which are the Works of his Hand absolutely at his Disposal: And consequently there is no Enemy that can pretend to dispute his Power, and deliver any from its Wrath; the Objects whereof can make no Confederacy against a Kingdom that thus ruleth over all. So that God very justly puts the Question, *Isa. x. 3. And what will ye do in the Day of Visitation, and in the Desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for Help? And where will ye leave your Glory?* And God proposes this as what should be a very

moving and dreadful Meditation to Transgressors. Psal. 1. 22. *Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in Pieces and there be none to deliver.*

Though but little of what this Subject would afford hath been said upon it; yet I hope you may be convinced of the Reasonableness of the Psalmist's Question, *who knoweth the Power of thine Anger?*

I shall now draw a few Inferences from this awful Subject, though, because of your Time, I can only mention *two* or *three* of them. And, 1. This speaks, with a loud Voice, Terror to the Workers of Iniquity; and proclaims the infinite Danger of all the Enemies of a God, in whose right Hand is the Power of this Anger. How dreadful is the Condition of an ungodly Man, who hath no Skreen to cover him from the angry Power of his God, but is every Moment in Hazard of having this Wrath let loose upon his Soul, and, at the utmost, hath nothing to secure him from becoming eternally the miserable Object, in whose Torments God will give a practical Answer to the Question, *who knoweth the Power of his Anger?* But a frail Life which is so uncertain, and liable to so numerous, and, oftentimes, unforeseen Disasters? Oh if we would but think what God is, and what his Power can do. If we could but look up to the Sun, a little Part whereof let fall upon our Earth would soon burn it up with its Inhabitants: Would we need any more to convince us, of the inconceivable Danger of those who are exposed to the immediate flaming Anger of the Being who made and kindled it; and to perswade us, that a Man ready to be tortured upon the Rack, or burnt at a Stake, may enjoy a perfect Calm without

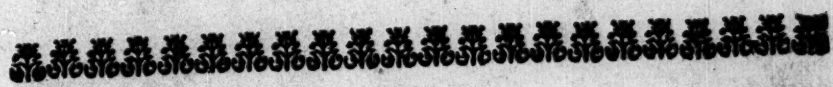
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out any Anxiety, and hath infinitely less considerable Reasons to be disturbed and perplexed, than the Sinner who is in such a Case. For I am sure the Scripture is express, that *God is angry with the Wicked every Day*, that Sin lays a Man open to all the Power of this Anger, and nothing but Repentance and Amendment can prevent its being poured out upon us. * * * * *



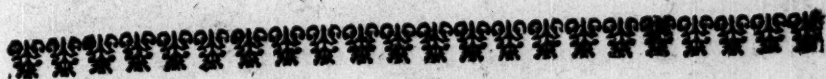
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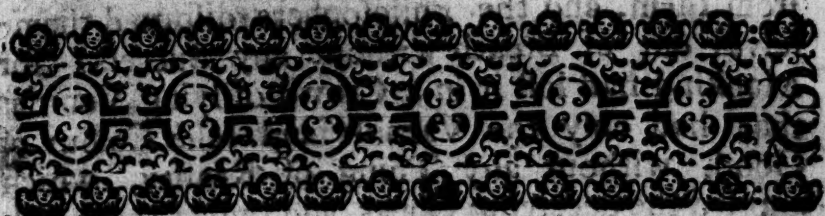


LECTURES

OF

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LECTURE I.

MATTH. V. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain: and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him.*

2. *And he opened his Mouth, and taught them, saying,*

3. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*



THE Verses which I have now read, are a Part of that famous Sermon which our blessed Saviour preached upon the Mount, and is the largest continued Discourse of his which is left upon Record in the holy Scriptures. In general, from the Beginning to the 13 Verse he gives his Hearers an Account of true un-

undisguised Happiness : For the Discovery whereof the wise Men had laboured, but it fled from them, and the Philosophers disputed themselves out of Breath without any Success ; for Mankind had lost it in a Crowd of lying Vanities that had only the Varnish and false Colour of Good, without any Thing of Reality, which amused the deceiving Hopes, and busied the foolish Minds of Sinners, who proposed to themselves Comfort and Bliss in Things under the Sun, and were not so wise as to come to God the chiefest Joy. And then, having, in the Four *Verses* following, proposed an Exhortation, which seems to be specially directed to such of his Hearers as were in a more peculiar Sense his Disciples, he, in the remaining Part of this and the following Chapters, applies himself at considerable Length to explain and vindicate that eternal Law of Righteousness, which the degenerate Teachers of the *Jewish* Church had so miserably corrupted, and debased from its infinite Purity and unbounded Extent, whereby it stretched it self to all the Thoughts as well as Actions of Men, and was to govern within their Breasts and Hearts, and not to regulate their outward Lives only. In Opposition to them, our Redeemer shews the low unworthy Notions they framed of this holy Law, and that it was *exceeding broad*, how much soever they had narrowed it : And that it was of inviolable unalterable Obligation, though the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* impiously fancied that its Precepts ought to yield, and bow themselves to their Traditions and Commandments. He also intermixes with this Doctrine, Directions and Exhortations to the Practice of it, backed with powerful Motives to engage them to be-

believe and to do. And then, in the End of the Seventh Chapter, he concludes this divine Discourse, by illustrating the excellent Wisdom of Religion, and the true Understanding of such as hearkned to his Doctrine and obeyed the Commandments of God, from a noble Comparison of the different Characters of the wise Man, who founded his House secure upon a steady Rock, and the Fool, who built it tottering upon the yielding Sand ready to be tumbled down by the first Storm and Tempest which attacked it.

Before I begin to explain these *Verses* in particular, it may not be amiss to take Notice, from the general Subject of this Sermon, of the plain Proofs we have in it, that the Saviour of Men gives no Encouragement to the least Violation of the smallest of God's Precepts, and that those debase the Grace of the Gospel, and divert it contrary to its divine Purposes, who take Occasion from it to flatter themselves in their Lusts, and a Neglect of any Duties prescribed by the moral Law. It is true, our Righteousness and good Works can never be too much decried, when they presumptuously intrude themselves into a Share in our Justification before God, in the Eyes of whose perfect Purity, that of Christ Jesus the Lord is the only white Raiment of the Saints which can cover us from the Power of his avenging Justice, and make us acceptable in his Sight; and the Freedom, the Riches, the Glory of Grace, can never be enough admired and adored by us: Yet, we are still to consider, that the Gospel and its Grace shines with the Beauty of Holiness, as well as with the Amiability of redeeming pardoning Love; and, while it proclaims the Blessings and Mercy of the everlasting

ing Covenant, it, at the same Time, commands us to purifie our selves from all Iniquity; and that the conquering Power of the invincible Captain of our Salvation, rescues all his sincere Followers from the Dominion of Sin and Corruption, subdues the Power of their Lusts and Passions and of every unrighteous Deed, as the irreconcilable Enemies to his Kingdom and Grace. The whole of this Sermon of Christ's shews that *without Holiness it is impossible to see the Lord*: And that such a Faith that doth not *work by Love*, and is not a Source of holy Obedience to all God's Commandments, gives no Title to the divine Favour, and is but a vain Pretence of having embraced Christ as a Saviour; for if he be so, he is our King too, and we must not only believe but obey, and bow our Necks under his Government. And this Example of our Redeemer, and the whole of his Discourses in these Chapters, are a Demonstration, that it is no Injury done to the Glory of Grace, to teach Men, and constantly press it upon them in the strongest Terms, to *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in all manner of Conversation*. Let all of us seriously and frequently remember what we have towards the Close of this Sermon in the 23 Verse of the 7 Chapter, namely, the Answer which our Lord at the last Day will give to many who make loud Pretences to be his Followers, and are noisy enough in calling him *Lord, Lord, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work Iniquity*.

I shall not take up much of your Time by examining, whether this Sermon be the same with that which we find recorded in the 6 Chapter of Luke. It seems highly probable that they are different,

ferent, and were spoken by Christ upon two Occasions, from the Difference of the Time as accounted for by the Evangelists, the considerable Variety of Circumstances; and because *Luke* omits so very many Things intirely, which are to be found in *Matthew*, 'tis hard to think they are the same Sermon, which will be easily perceived by such as compare them together.

I shall now begin and explain a few of these Verses as they ly in Order.

I. *And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain; and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him.*

There seems to be no Occasion of seeking a Mystery in Christ's here preaching upon a *Mountain*; or to imagine that he chused this Place, because God had in like Manner thundred his Law from Mount *Sinai*. The plain obvious Reason is, because it was the fittest Place for his teaching, that he might be retired from the Inconveniencies of the greater Crowd which thronged him in the Plain, and then speak with the more Advantage to such as would be at the Pains to follow him to the Mountain.

When he was set. This may possibly be in Allusion to the Custom of the *Jewish* Doctors, who to hold forth their Dignity and Authority used to teach sitting. *His Disciples came unto him.* Though, as I have already mentioned, some Parts of this Sermon seem to be peculiarly directed to his Disciples, who had already declared themselves to be his Followers; yet, we are not to think that they were his only Hearers. For it is certain, that they were very numerous, from the Twenty eighth

Verse of the Seventh Chapter, where it is said; that *the People*, or Multitudes, so the original Word signifies, *were astonished at his Doctrine.*

II. *And he opened his Mouth, and taught them.*

How endearing should it be to our Souls, that he, who from Eternity had been possessed of the Glory and Majesty on high, he who was himself the mighty God and King of many Thousands of exalted Spirits surrounding his Throne, burning with ardent Love, celebrating his Praise in the loudest Songs, and ever standing ready to do his Pleasure; should lay aside that Honour, and veil it over with Flesh, and come down upon Earth, that he might be our Teacher and Prophet to instruct us in the Way unto Immortality; and that without being attended by the Terrors of his almighty Greatness, and the Thunder and Flames which frightened the *Israelites* at *Sinai* when God delivered his Law. He here bespeaks Sinners in the still calm Voice of the Gospel, now is fulfilled in our Ears the glorious Promise which we have, *Deut. xviii. 15. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.* This should certainly excite our Diligence, and awaken all our Attention thereto, that this is the Doctrine immediately delivered from the Mouth of him who is Grace and Truth it self, the Fountain of Life and of Light. How inexcusable will we be, if we neglect so exalted a Prophet? And of how much sorer Punishment shall we be thought worthy, than those who despised *Moses's* Law? Let us therefore give the more earnest Heed to his Doctrine, fix it in our
Minds,

Minds, that at no Time we let it slip, and carefully comply with it in our Lives: How shall we escape being consumed by that flaming Fire wherewith Jesus shall be surrounded when he comes to take Vengeance upon them that know not God, and disobey his Gospel, if we do not now study to pay a suitable Regard to this Word, which at first began to be spoken to us by the Lord?

III. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

This and the eight following Verses, contain that Part of our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, which is ordinarily distinguished by the Name of the *Beatitudes*. The ungodly Part of Mankind, however so far different their Views seem to be, conspire in seeking Happiness from the good Things of a present Life; and so they are all busied in the hot Pursuit, some, of its Ease and Pleasures; some, of its Riches and Profits; others, of its Honours, Glory and Applause: Now here our Saviour points them out to that enduring Blessedness which should never have an End, that they might no more *trust to broken Reeds*, and *seek the living amongst the dead*. He lays open the chief Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life, and the principal Parts of that *Godliness which is profitable unto all Things*; together with peculiar Rewards annexed to each of them, suitable to their several Natures; every one of which was a Proof that *blessed is the Man who is in such a Case*: And in some of them prepares his Disciples for these Tribulations and Persecutions which were to be the Portion of his Followers in all Ages, particularly in the Spring of Christianity, and through Numbers

of which they were to force their Way to the Kingdom, by shewing that whatever might be the blind Opinion of foolish Sinners, who look no further than to the Things that are temporal, yet such as were persecuted for Righteousness sake, should receive a great Reward in Heaven, and would be clothed with a distinguishing illustrious Character there, from the Consideration whereof *the Offence of the Cross* should cease.

In this Third Verse we have, 1. The Persons who are pronounced happy, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit.* 2. We have the Proof that they are so, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

As to the first of these, it seems very plain, that we are not to understand by *the poor*, those who want Means of a comfortable Subsistence in this Earth; for this is sufficiently determined by its being added, *in Spirit*: And though it must be owned that an affluent plentiful Condition of Life hath peculiar Temptations attending it, which make it extremely hard for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God, and that *the Prosperity of Fools frequently destroys them*; yet, Poverty hath also its dangerous Snares which lead some Persons to the utmost Excesses of Sin, and daily Experience is a Demonstration that Penury is far from being constantly attended by Piety. So that it must be a very weak Argument, which the Popish Commentators bring from this Place in favours of voluntary Poverty, and the Practice of their mendicant or begging Friars; so far are such from answering the Character mentioned in the Text, that their vain glorying in an uncommanded Devotion and Humility, and their impudently pretending unto Merit thereby, argues the utmost Pride, which

is the direct Contradiction to Poverty of Spirit.

Nor, 2^{dly}. Are we herein to include a creeping Meanness or a Softness of Spirit, no, a Person by becoming a Christian does not cease to be a Man, and, though endued with that Lowliness of Mind which the Gospel recommends, he may have a just Concern for his Rights and Liberties, act up to the Dignity of any Station in which the divine Providence placeth him. And then *the poor in Spirit*, here declared *blessed*, are far from having a degenerate slavish Temper, or being abandoned to Cowardice and Fear: No, the true Christian is indeed possessed of the noblest Generosity, and most elevated Greatness of Soul, and shews an incomparably firmer Courage, than any of the vain Heroes of Sin; for *he who subdues his own Spirit*, says the wise Man, *is better than the mighty*. And it must be the most glorious and heroick Bravery, to fight undaunted against *Spiritual Principalities and Powers*, and, under the Conduct of the Redeemer, to do valiantly against the Rage and Cunning of Hell, to conquer our Lusts and curb the unruly Passions, to abandon the Pleasures of Sense, and the Delights of Sin, and, with unwearied Resolution, to struggle against the Power of Corruption and manifold Temptations, to press through many Tribulations, yea, Death and the Grave, to gain the Prize, and all this by trusting in an invisible General. So that it is plain, this Poverty of Spirit is far from including any Thing like Faint-heartedness and Cowardice, or a low effeminate Mind; since the sincerely Religious have indeed the steadiest Courage and the most exalted Greatness of Spirit:

And hence, *Rev. xxi. 8.* The fearful and unbelieving are joyned amongst the Number of those who should have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone.

But positively, we may consider the poor in Spirit in these three Respects, namely, as this Temper hath a Regard to God, themselves and their Neighbours: And, though I may seem to insist here at too great a Length for a Discourse of this Nature; yet, I shall speak a little upon it, this Poverty of Spirit being the leading Grace, and the principal Character of the truly blessed which are mentioned in this Place.

First then, *Poverty of Spirit*, as it regards God and our self, for I shall joyn them in part together, seems to consist in a deep-rooted Impression of the unbounded Perfections of the supreme Being, and of the infinite Disproportion there is betwixt him and us, attended with a Temper and Disposition of Mind suitable to these Sentiments: For Example, the poor in Spirit hath a steady Perswasion that God's Understanding is infinite; that his Eye pierceth into the darkest Counsels of Hell, and all the Recesses and Windings of Knowledge of whatever kind; and that with him is no Darkness nor Mistake at all: Whereas, finite Creatures, in their best Estate, can receive but a few of the Rays of that purest Light in which their Maker dwells; so that innumerable Truths, with respect to the divine Excellencies and Management, must be hid from their Knowledge, veiled over by the glorious Obscurity of inaccessible Light: And he is sensible that the Condition of sinful Man exposes him to Ignorance and Deceit, that our Understandings are surrounded with Clouds
and

and Mists, and darkned by Passions and Prejudices. Agreeably hereto, *the poor in Spirit* hath a humble Disposition of Mind, ready to submit his Notions, and bow his weak Reasonings to divine Revelation, and does not expect to comprehend every Thing which such a God may command him to believe; being satisfied that there are numberless Intricacies in the Management of Providence, and the Mystery of Grace, which he cannot unfold: And therefore he is ready to admire and adore what he sees, and then to cry out, *That the divine Ways are unsearchable, and his Paths past finding out.*

The poor in Spirit have a lively Sense of the infinite Holiness of him *in whose Sight the Heavens are not clean*, and before the Glory of whose Purity the brightest Angels cover their blushing Faces with their Wings: And at the same Time is convinced that he hath abandoned himself unto Folly, and is sunk in the Mire of Sin and Sense, hath become a disgraceful Slave to his Lusts and Pleasures, and thereby debased himself as low as Hell. The Impressions hereof cover Vanity and Pride from his Eyes; and perswade him that his best Services, since every where there is a Mixture of Sin or Imperfection, are infinitely unbecoming such a God, and that his Righteousness can never extend to his Maker. This is the continued Voice of *Poverty of Spirit*, *how can Man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a Woman? Behold even to the Moon, and it shineth not; yea, the Stars are not pure in his Sight: How much less Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man which is a Worm?*

The poor in Spirit hath a Conviction of the absolute Right that the great Creator hath to all the Works

Works which his Fingers have made, that Dominion and Fear, in the highest Sense, must be with him ; he knows that he hath proved a Traitor to this King, and ungrateful and rebellious against the God of his Being and Life : Which makes him resigned and submissive to the divine Providence, sensible, that as the Clay can never have reason to complain of its Potter, so he is always *punished less than his Iniquities deserve*, and that, while it were no Injury in God to precipitate his Soul into consuming Flames, he must while he is a living Man have no Ground to fret or repine, but to adore Mercy and Grace in whatever Circumstances he may be placed. This Poverty asketh the Question. *Lam. iii. 39. Wherefore doth a living Man complain, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins?* and influenceth him to resolve with *Micah vii. 9. I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.*

And then, for I must not enlarge further, the poor in Spirit, as this Temper of Mind regards himself and his Neighbours, is not blown up with a swelling Conceit of his own Merit and Abilities ; but beholds in all his Actions and Thoughts a Thousand Blemishes for one Beauty, he lives under the Conviction of his own Failings, and so is ready to overlook the Weaknesses of others ; he knows how ready he is to be transported with Passion, and hurried into Rashness, biassed by Prejudices, or imposed on by plausible Pretences, and that, if these be not his Imperfections, some other Defects, perhaps more dangerous, fill their Place. And therefore he does not insolently contemn others, or behold them with a supercilious Look ; he is far from imagining that he himself is exalted

above

above the common State of Men, and secured from Ignorance and Mistake, and so he is humble and modest, diffident and distrustful of himself, and charitable towards others: For 'tis the Absence of this Grace, and the prevailing of the contrary Temper, *Pride of Spirit*, a fond Opinion of all that we our selves think or do, that is the principal Source of Uncharitableness, Contention and Strife. Poverty of Spirit inclines to a pitying compassionate Disposition, to do good unto all, and promote the Interests of others as there is Access, *knowing that himself is also in the Body*. And, when he considers what a Deluge of Wrath he deserves from the Justice of an offended God, how many Errors or wilful Sins he hath every Day reason to beg Pardon for at the Throne of Grace, and how compassionate and gracious a merciful Redeemer hath been to him, he is inclined to pass by Offences, and forgive Injuries, and stifle the Stirrings of Resentment and Revenge. And then if the Riches and Honours of this Earth crown his Head, and plentifully flow in upon him, he does not vainly boast of the Favours of Providence, or extravagantly value himself upon these outward Trappings and Ornaments, which may add to the Lustre and Shew, but nothing to the Merit and Worth of the Person who hath them. In a Word, we have a very good Account of this Grace, *Rom. xii. 3. For a Man not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith*: And as a Consequence hereof, *Ver. 10. To be kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another*.

2dly. We

2dly. We have the Reward which attends this Grace, or the Argument to prove that, *blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Though the Gospel State is often expressed by this Phrase, and needs not be excluded in this Place; yet hereby the Sanctuary of Immortality and Life, the State of future Glory, is directly intended. The Excellency of this World to come, is shadowed forth to us in Scripture by such Things as are most valued upon Earth, because, though these are at the most but faint Emblems of what is to be enjoyed there, yet nothing here below can tend to raise our Notions of it higher: Hence all the Redeemed are said to be *made Kings and Priests unto God*; and it is expressed by a *Kingdom* and a *Crown*, which are the last Wishes of the most towering Ambition. How glorious is this *Kingdom* here promised to the *poor in Spirit*? *In the midst of it God dwells, so that it can never be moved*; it is secure from the Attacks of Enemies, and without any Convulsions or the least Discontent of its Inhabitants, for there the divine Presence spreads every where immortal Satisfaction and Joy. It is the *Kingdom of Heaven* or of *God*, that House which he in a peculiar manner hath built, every way worthy of its great Author. It is the Perfection of Excellency, that *God himself will be a Crown of Glory and a Diadem of Beauty to the People there*: He will be the inexhausted Source, whence the *Rivers of Pleasures* which overflow in it, shall to Eternity issue; there the infinite Fountains of divine Goodness and Grace will be fully opened, and send forth those *Streams* which *make glad the City of our God*, and leave no Room for a remaining Wish; and there will be neither Ignorance nor Error, but
God

God himself will be the Sun to shine with an invariable Brightness, and no Cloud to interpose betwixt him and our Eyes ; there Dispute and Debate are intirely banished by that purest Light, which, with an Excess of Satisfaction, will insinuate it self into all the Recesses of heavenly Minds, and the little Remains of Discord, which will still be found in the best Societies amongst Men, shall be succeeded by the harmonious Concord of the united Hallelujahs of the Redeemed, and swallowed up of everlasting Agreement and Love. In a Word, it is a Kingdom where there is Fulness of every Good, and no Allay of the smallest Evil ; where all the Inhabitants have the Vigour and Firmness of an eternal Youth, and the Sedateness and Serenity of old Age ; where dwells a Happiness larger than the Wishes of a Seraph, and as lasting as Immortality.

There seems, as I noticed in the Beginning, to be a peculiar Proportion betwixt the Graces and Virtues mentioned in the *Beatitudes*, and the Rewards annexed to them. To all the others, except that of *Persecution for Righteousness sake*, there are only particular Blessings subjoyned ; and to this of *Poverty of Spirit, the Kingdom of Heaven*, or the general Happiness of the future State is promised, and that very emphatically, on these two Accounts :

1. That this Virtue of *Poverty of Spirit* hath, of all others, the most diffusive and universal Influence upon a Person's Compliance with the Terms of the Gospel, and is what fits him most for running in the Ways to this *Kingdom of Heaven*. The Doctrine of Christianity was a *Mystery hid from Ages and Generations*, and contained unfathomable Depths of Wisdom

Wisdom and Grace; upon which account it was *Foolishness to the Greeks*, who measured it by the false Rules of their vain Philosophy; and a *Stumbling-block to the Jews*, whose giddy Heads were turned round with the Dream of a pompous conquering Messiah. Now *Poverty of Spirit* was the most necessary Quality for obviating these different Offences, and engaging them to bow to the divine Revelation, though they did not comprehend all the Ways of God; this Poverty would also make the Person abandon Thoughts of Merit and a Righteousness of his own, and move him to trust and rely intirely upon the Obedience of a Saviour, and depend upon Influences from the Head of the Redeemed, that *Captain of Salvation*, under whom alone he could do *valiantly*, for *vain were the Help of Man* and his own Endeavours; this *Poverty of Spirit* would induce them to *deny themselves*, take up the Cross of the Messiah, and resign their All to the divine Disposal; this Grace empties a Man of himself, makes him run for Refuge to the Hope set before him, and, for spiritual Strength and Success, to him in whom dwells all the Fulness of the Godhead; and, in a Word, there is no Part of Christian Practice, nor any of the gradual Advances in the divine Life, necessary in order to our being made meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, but upon which *Poverty of Spirit* hath a very powerful and peculiar Influence: So that it is justly said, *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. But,

2dly. It is remarkable to this Purpose, that *Poverty of Spirit*, in a peculiar manner, qualifies for a quicker Taste of the Blessings of the heavenly State, and contributes to the heightning our Happiness when

when brought thither. But, though this is a Subject which deserves to be discoursed on at a greater length, I can only touch at it. One great Part of the Joy of Heaven will flow from the Love of God and Christ, and the more ardent that divine Flame burns, the greater will be the Happiness: Now, 'tis evident, that the lower Thoughts any have of themselves, and the more exalted Views they have of God, they will become the deeper affected with the Obligations they are under to him, and the divine Favours will be endeared to them by a Sense of the infinite Disproportion betwixt their poor Services and his glorious Excellencies. So that *the poor in Spirit*, when they look to their God and themselves, will be all kindled into a Fire of Love to him, every Spark of which will quicken their Pleasure, and put Life into their Satisfaction. And it may be also conceived, that the higher Saints in Heaven exalt their King, and the lower they debase themselves, *that is*, the poorer they be *in Spirit*, they must be the more ravished with divine Condescension, and have the greater Degree of Complacency, in enjoying him as a Father and a Friend. These Things would need to be explained at greater length, but I shall only add, that, agreeably hereto, 'tis highly probable that it was Want of *Poverty*, or the *Pride of Spirit*, which made the apostate Angels discontented with the Kingdom of Heaven, and not satisfied with the Happiness there.

IV. *Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.*

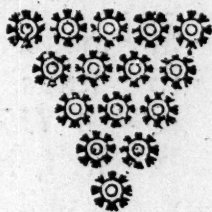
It needs no long Proof, that we are not to understand by these that are described as *mourning*; such who have naturally a melancholy Temper; since that hath not a necessary Connexion with Religion and gracious Principles; Though, it may even be owned, that such a Disposition in it self seems, at least, more decent and becoming a Criminal, who is in a continual Hazard of the Vengeance of eternal Fire, than the Madness and Mirth to which the foolish abandon themselves. But by these that *mourn*, are signified such as have that *godly Sorrow which worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of*; namely, those who are convinced of their aggravated Transgressions against so good a God, and their Treachery and ungrateful Disobedience to their Redeemer, who died for them, and did so great Things to save them; and are thereupon covered with Shame and Confusion of Face, and affected with the deepest Humiliation and Sorrow because of their Folly, and *weep and mourn because of him whom they have pierced*; and are cast down and disconsolate from a thorough Conviction of their Vileness and Shame.

Now, these shall be *comforted*, which may in Part relate to this Life, when God gives to such the Consolations of his holy Spirit, discovers himself to the Soul a reconciled Father; and sweetens their Grief and Afflictions, by making all his Perfections shine in upon them amiable and endearing in the Redeemer's Face: Then he *appoints unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them Beauty for Ashes, the Oyl of Joy for Mourning, and the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness*. And then, which is the full Meaning of this Promise,

he will at length exalt them into that Kingdom, where never is any *Sin* or *Sorrow*; where God will, with his own Hand, *wipe away all Tears from their Eyes*; and where they will soon forget their short Grievs and Disquiet, which will be swallowed up in an Ocean of Love, and a *Fulness of Joys* to endure for evermore.

I shall not enter upon the following Verse, and shall only add, Let us make so wise a Choice, as to seek our Happiness by these Paths of Religion here pointed out to us. Constant Experience may assure us, that all the Pleasures of this Life, and the best Offers of Sin, are empty Phantoms, *Vanity with Vexation of Spirit*: And that at length, however they may now amuse us, *the Wicked shall be driven away in his Wickedness*, while *the Righteous hath Hope in his Death*. And, I am sure, we cannot fear that our Saviour, who died for Sinners and gave himself for them, would willingly impose upon us a false *Blessedness*; or that he can be deceived, who is Truth it self.

May that glorious Redeemer, who in these Chapters executes the Office of a Prophet, set up his Kingdom in our Hearts; subdue our Indisposition for these Virtues, by the Power of his Grace; engage us to enter upon the Paths of Immortality, and carry us on in them, till we arrive at this *Kingdom of Heaven*.





LECTURE II.

MATTH. V.

5. *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the Earth.*
6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness: for they shall be filled.*
7. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain Mercy.*



HAPPINESS is the general Pursuit of Mankind; and the united Voice of them all, *Who will shew us any Good?* To this Point they bend all their Studies and Endeavours; that they may be amongst that Number of whom it may be asserted, *Blessed are they:* But yet in nothing are Men more fatally mistaken, than in the Choice they make. So far do Sinners run out of the Way that leads to valuable Good; that they *sow to themselves Wind and reap Vanity;* and hug, with foolish Mirth, in their Bosom these devouring Coals, which will for ever consume them

them and rage in their Bowels : And a cunning Devil, so artfully gilds over and sweetens the Poison of wicked Works, that, though they will, without peradventure, prove at length Rottenness to the Bones; yet they are now *rolled under the Tongue as a delicious Morsel*, by unthinking Men: Would we seriously consider the quite different Account which our Saviour gives, in these Verses, of undeceiving and undisguised Blessedness, we might then find that God is the only *exceeding Joy*; and the *Light of his Countenance* the true Good.

The last Occasion I had of discoursing in this Place, I introduced my self, by touching at a few Things with respect to the general Subject of this divine Sermon of our Redeemer's, and then explained the first Four Verses of this Chapter; and I proceed now to the Fifth.

V. Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the Earth.

Here we have, 1. The Persons who are pronounced happy, *Blessed are the meek*. 2dly. We have the Argument to prove them so, drawn from a special Privilege annexed to this Grace, *For they shall inherit the Earth*. By the *meek* here we are to understand such as are of a humble, lowly, quiet, condescending Disposition of Mind; who have attained to something of a Mastery over their Passions, that they cannot break so easily loose as in others, in whom they reign ungoverned without Controul; who curb Anger and Revenge, and are careful to bridle the first Stirrings thereof; and manage themselves according to the Laws of Religion, and as becomes the Followers of Jesus. Though a good natural Temper is an

excellent Advantage to any who possess it, and calls upon them to thank and praise the Author of their Nature for bestowing this valuable Blessing, which certainly renders the subduing of their own Spirit far more easy, than it can be to others who are naturally prone to Wrath: Yet, we are not to imagine that the whole of this Virtue of Meekness consists herein, and that every Person who may be good natured can lay a just Claim to it: The not resenting of Injuries, and silently bearing with them, may in such Cases flow from a Softness of Mind, and a Degeneracy and Cowardice of Spirit: which are no Christian Graces, but rather opposed to and inconsistent with them, and may have nothing of Regard to God and Religion, nor any Principles of right Reason influencing them: And this Meekness here spoken of is very agreeable to the most exalted Greatness of Soul, for *he that subdueth his own Spirit, saith the wise Man, is better than the mighty.* But,

The meek is such a Person who is averse from Anger and Wrath, as below the Dignity of his Reason, and the Power of that holy Religion which he professeth; whereby he is obliged to pull down these strong Holds of Satan, and conquer that Spirit of Passion and Pride which rages in the Children of Disobedience: And so he endeavours always to preserve this happy Calmness and Composure of Mind, even amidst the greatest and rudest Provocations and Affronts, which he may meet with from the Ruggedness and ill Nature of others. Some Persons are so easily inflamed by the smallest Contradiction to their Inclinations, or the least Piece of Neglect or Contempt put upon them, that, as Powder wants nothing to
blow

blow it all up, but to be touched by the little Sparklings from the Flint, so, their Corruptions are kindled into a Fire by every Temptation of this Nature, which the Devil lays in their Way: But the meek, upon the other hand, hath such a Calinness and Serenity of Mind, such a deep Sense of his own Weakness and Unworthiness, so powerful Convictions of the Excellency of Humility and long-suffering Patience, that he endeavours calmly to possess his own Soul, not to be readily provoked by the Indignities which may be poured out upon him; but strives to be like to the Captain of his *Salvation*, who *endured the Contradiction of Sinners against himself, and being reviled, reviled not again*; his Mind is not soon sowed or fretted by the injurious and undeserved Treatment which others may give him; nor is he so incensed, as immediately to break off all Friendship and good Offices towards the Person who hath been faulty to him, but rather glories silently to pass by Offences, to forget them, and to be *ready to render Good for Evil, and Blessings for Curses, and to pray for them who despitefully use him*. The meek is of an affable easy Disposition, and, when in Society, he is ever for Harmony and Peace; and his Love to such as are joyned with him, or his Endeavours in the Way of his own Duty, are not disturbed, because, possibly, he may have been slighted, his Counsel neglected, and not so great a Deference and Regard paid to his Opinion and Desires as he may fancy were due to them, or what they, it may be, really deserved: But is ready to cover the Defects, and not to be soon irritated by the Misbehaviour of these he converses with. His blessed Temper makes him a constant Enemy to Contention, Hatred and

Strife, according to the Apostle's Exhortation, *Coloss. iii. 12. Put on therefore (as the Elect of God, holy and beloved) Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

The meek live under continued Impressions, that they have debased themselves lower than Hell by their Disobedience to God, that they are, *from the Crown of their Head to the Sole of their Foot, full of Wounds, Bruises and putrifying Sores*; that every Moment of their Lives requires divine Forbearance and Compassions; and that, if God had been easily irritated and kindled into Anger by the many Affronts they daily offer to his Laws, and the Indignities they do to his Majesty and Government, they had long ago been consumed. And, indeed, it is scarce conceivable, that Persons who have a due Conviction of these Things, should not themselves be meek and lowly, not easily provoked by Injuries, or impatient of Neglect and Contradiction to their Humour and Inclinations. A Sense hereof will make them study, as it is, *Eph. iv. 1, 2. to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love.*

The meek is not puffed up, or under the Dominion of vain Glory and the Love of Esteem and Applause: And so, though his Parts and Abilities be undervalued, though these that in many Qualifications and Accomplishments are inferior to him should be preferred before him, though his good Name were wounded by Calumny and Reproach, and pierced through by an Arrow

winged

winged with Malice and Uncharitableness, and his best Actions misinterpreted and covered over with false Colours; yet he does not thereby lose his Temper and Patience, or meditate Anger and Revenge: He does not burn with Envy, nor is hurried on by Fury and Rage; but endeavours to forgive and forget, to regain his Reputation and Honour rather by Christian Moderation and Humility, than by a retaliating Evil for Evil, and seeking to expose the Faults and Weaknesses of those who have injured him. The *meek* is submissive under the Frowns of divine Providence, and the Crosses and Disappointments he may meet with; and, how little soever he may merit hard Treatment from the Hands of Men, he knows that he deserves infinitely worse from an offended God, and therefore he resigns his Fame, Reputation, Health, Estate, and Life it self, to the Disposal of the sovereign God, without grumbling and repining, when he suffers them to be sullied, or deprives him of them. The Voice of Meekness saith, with respect to the most grievous Circumstances in his Lot, *It is the Lord, let him do whatever pleaseth him*: Following the Example of the meek and lowly Jesus, *He was oppressed and was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth; he is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth.*

The *meek* is so far from expecting that every Body should stoop to his Humour, or bow themselves to his Inclinations, that he is ready himself, as far as is possible, to study the different Capacities of others, and adapt his Behaviour thereto; to discover the Peculiarities of their Way and Humour, and conform himself to them, though they

may run counter to his own Temper and Disposition. The *meek* stretcheth himself to manage pleasingly and agreeably to all Men, and to do or say willingly nothing that may offend them, to pass over their Weakness and Imperfections, and, when he becomes acquainted with their Defects, to keep off the sore Places by touching which they may be fretted and irritated. And this Way he regulates his Conduct with respect to Persons of whatever Condition, Temper or Station of Life they be, like the Apostle *Paul*, who herein gave a Proof how very great Advances he had made in this Grace. *I. Cor. ix. 22. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all Things to all Men, that I might by all Means save some.*

And then the *meek* is not immediately blown up into a Passion, or fretful and uneasie when he is reprov'd for his Faults, and hath his Follies laid before him: Being convinced that he hath many Defects, and that he performs the best Office who makes him sensible of them, and is a truer Friend than he who flatters even his Blemishes and Weaknesses; though, alas, our Vanity and Pride make such a false Friendship generally more pleasing to us. He is perswaded, as it is, *Prov. xii. 1. That whoso loveth Instruction loveth Knowledge, but he that hateth Reproof is brutish; and that 'tis the foolish Scorn-er alone who hateth his Reprover:* And therefore saith with the Psalmist, *Psal. cxli. 5. Let the righteous smite me it shall be a Kindness, and let him reprove me it shall be an excellent Oyl, which shall not break my Head.*

And then, upon the other hand, the *meek*, when either as a private Person he admonishes o-
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thers of their Faults, he doth it with all Gentleness, in such a winning engaging Manner, as shews he designs their Good, to reclaim but not to reproach them for their Failings; and does not, by an ill-timed or ill-managed Rebuke, rather rivet the Person's Inclination to the Vice faster than it was before, deafen his Ears against after Admonitions, and render him the more irreclaimable: Or if in a more publick Capacity he be obliged authoritatively to rebuke such as offend, the meek Person is not harsh and severe in his Reproofs, but makes a Spirit of Tenderneſs and Compassion run through them all: He is far from insulting and exposing his Offender to the Contempt and Scorn of others, or a rigid upbraiding his Errors; but shews, by his gentle meek Management, that Love to the Person and an earnest Desire that he should become wiser and better, and thus regain his Honour and Reputation, is the Spring which moves him; according to *Gal. vi. 1. Brethren, if a Man be in a Fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such as one in the Spirit of Meekneſs.*

And when he considers his own Errors, and that *he who thinks he stands wants to take heed lest he fall,* he does not look down upon the Miscarriages of others with a proud supercilious Eye, nor triumphs over them; but hearkens to what the Apostle saith, *Tit. iii. 2, 3. To speak Evil of no Man, to be no Brawlers, but gentle, shewing all Meekneſs to all Men: For we our selves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, &c.*

In a Word, for I have been too long on this Subject, the meek Person makes a moderate, calm, lowly, condescending Spirit run through the whole of his Management: Even where he is
most

most active and rigorous in the Affairs of God and Religion, he does not then intermix the Sallies of an unbridled Passion, the Storms of Envy, Malice or Revenge, with the Actings of a lively Zeal for God; nor does he fancy that a gratifying an unrestrained Humour, and letting loose Reins to the Violence of impetuous Inclinations, is the same Thing with a fervent active Concern for his Glory and Honour. And, by such a Spirit of Meekness abounding in him, he shews that his Diligence and Zeal in Matters of God, flow not from the Force of a natural Forwardness and Vehemence, but from the Strength of Reason and the Power of Religion: And thus he behaves himself in his greatest Struggles for the Honour of God. Yea, while he argues for the very Fundamentals of Religion, and *gives a Reason of the Hope that is in him*, he does it with Meekness and Fear, having, in all these Things, before his Eyes his blessed Redeemer, who though he burned with the most fervent Love to God, and shone with the brightest Zeal for his Service, yet he always bore up to the Character of the meek and lowly Jesus.

2dly. We have the Privilege annexed to this Grace, or the Argument to prove that *blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth*. I need scarce mention to you, that we are not to fancy that the Reward of the meek will consist only in the Things that are temporal; no, God will beautifie the meek with Salvation, and that to endure through the endless Ages. But, as I formerly noticed, that there seems always to be observed a peculiar Proportion betwixt the Grace or Virtue mentioned in these *Beatitudes*, and the Blessing subjoyned to it: So we shall find, that *Meekness of Spirit*

Spirit hath a native Influence upon the Persons *inheriting the Earth*. By which we are not to understand large Possessions, an overflowing of earthly Goods, or an exalted Station in the World: No, these are no where promised to the truly pious, nor is it needful they should; for the real Comfort and Satisfaction of a *Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth*. But this *inheriting of the Earth* here promised, may include these *three Things*.

1. The meek are indeed in the readiest Way to enjoy such Things as are needful and convenient with the greatest Security, and to have the longest and most undisturbed Possession of them. He is hereby freed from a Number of Enemies, which the contrary Vice, a furious angry Spirit, and the Effects of it, Strife, uncharitable Reflexions, and irritating Speeches, expose a Man to. For such a Person creates to himself a World of Adversaries; who will strive to get him stript of his Possessions and revenge themselves upon him, he sets every Man's Hand against him, renders himself odious to all about him, who thereupon are watchful of every Opportunity to make him uneasy, and promote his Ruin: Whereas the *meek* endears himself to his Neighbours, does not by his Carriage provoke them to attempt any Thing to his Disadvantage; but by his meek, patient, condescending Disposition insinuates himself into their Affections, and makes them contribute their joyned Endeavours to maintain him easie and quiet in that Part of the Earth which he inherits, for they rejoyce in his Prosperity instead of envying or repining at it. The angry, furious, haughty Man inflames the same Passions in others against him, and
so

so imbitters his Inheritance with continued Envy, Discord and Contention : But the *meek* Person, when he falls under the Frowns of Providence, or is attacked by powerful Malice or Coverousness, is pitied, and readily supported and assisted by the many Friends which his blessed Temper must needs have procured him. And then, the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit is so lovely and amiable, and shines with so true a Lustre, that it can scarce miss of procuring Esteem and Favour, from any who have the smallest Remains of Generosity. Nothing will sooner appease an enraged Enemy, and secure us from his Anger, than *Meekness*, which appears so beautiful, even to Persons who are themselves deprived of this blessed Temper, that it will readily charm the cruellest Tyger, and make him relent, and move up Bowels of Compassion. Meekness blunts the Edge of Fury and Rage, and calms the Storms which would otherwise blow upon and overthrow our Inheritance. Nor, indeed, is there any Thing that will put a covetous and unjust Man sooner to the Blush, and make him ashamed of his Oppression and Injuries, than a meek quiet Temper of Spirit, and a becoming Carriage under them : And, as the wise Man tells us, *Prov. xv. 1. A soft Answer turneth away Wrath, but grievous Words stir up Anger.*

So that you see, whatever may be the Voice of Folly, that Meekness of Spirit natively tends to procure a Person the securest Enjoyment, and undisturbed Possession even of the good Things of this Earth. It is very remarkable, that the Conquests and Victories whereby the Messiah subdues the utmost End of the Earth for a Possession to him, are ascribed to his Meekness. *Psal. xlv. 4. And in thy*

thy Majesty ride prosperously, because of Truth, and Meekness, and Righteousness.

But 2dly. The *meek in Spirit* may be said to *inherit the Earth*, because this Temper is a Source of the truest Comfort and Satisfaction in that Part of it which they possess, being *content with such Things as he hath, and not envying the foolish*. He must needs have a more agreeable Relish of the Favours of Providence than the proud angry Man, who never thinks he hath enough, and loseth his Temper and Reason upon every Disappointment: For Wrath and Revenge are a cruel Fire, some Sparks whereof may fall upon others; but it always rages with the greatest Violence within the Person's own Breast. The meek Man can sit easie and unmoved, and feels no Pain and Disquiet from these little Provocations, the Affronts and Neglects which a Person must always lay his Account to meet with: Whereas the angry and impatient, who wants this Grace, is put all in a foming Rage by them, and so banisheth away his Peace and Satisfaction, and *is like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*. The meek is so far Master of his Repose, that he does not put it in the Power of every Person who pleaseth to disturb it; and he is not disquieted by these little Accidents, which, like a Whirlwind carry before them the Tranquillity and Comfort of others. So that it is he, who, in the only valuable Sense, *inherits the Earth*.

And, 3dly. The meek Person is not made unhappy by every cross Wind, which may blow upon his Inheritance. He easily submits to Providence, and bears up with Patience under his Adversity: And so he enjoys that Part of the Earth which he in-

inherits, without distracting Fears of losing it. And, as this Grace is valuable upon the account of the Influence it hath on our present Tranquillity, and more for that which it hath on our immortal Happiness, so it was particularly fit to be mentioned by our Saviour in this Sermon: Meekness being one of the chief and brightest Virtues of Christianity, and what his Followers had special Use for, being to abandon both the Pride and Vain-glory of the heathen Philosophers, and the Affectation of a temporal King, a *Messiah* who should place *Judea* upon the Top of the Nations, upon which the *Jews* so extravagantly doted; and, instead of these, to be exposed to the Contempt, Scorn and Reproach of Sinners; and they stood in need of high Degrees of *Meekness*, to enable any of them to bear up to that Part of the Character of an Apostle, mentioned I. Cor. iv. 12, 13. *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the Filth of the World, and are the Off-scouring of all Things unto this Day.*

VI. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Though *Righteousness* is sometimes used in a restrained Sense, for the particular Virtues of Justice; Yet, it seems plain, that we are to enlarge its Meaning in this Place, and understand by it the whole of Religion and Holiness, all the Graces and Duties of the Christian Life; as it is taken in several other Places, particularly where we are commanded to seek first the Kingdom of God and his *Righteousness*. The Inclination, Desire or Tendency of the Persons, here pronounced *blessed*, towards it,

it, is expressed by *hungring* and *thirsting*: And it includes, with a great deal of Elegancy and Force, these Things.

1. *Hunger* and *Thirst*, especially when arrived at any Height, are the quickest of all our Senses, and make a Person feel the absolute Necessity he hath of Meat and Drink to satisfy them. Our Bodies may want a great many Things to preserve the Vigour of their Constitution, and augment their Health and Firmness, while we may be ignorant what they are, and a thousand Amusements might please the Ear or the Eye, which yet we may be unacquainted with, and not feel the Want of: But the Cravings of *Hunger* and *Thirst* are so clamorous and constant, that no Man in such a Case doubts of his Need of Food. So the Person here spoken of must have lively Impressions that he is despoiled of the Ornaments of Innocence, and yet, that they are absolutely necessary for his Honour and Happiness: And his Desires go as natively after Purity and Holiness, as the thirsty Man tends to what may quench his Drought.

And so in the second Place, he that *hungers after Righteousness* must be restless till he be possessed of it, find no Relish and Pleasure in any other Enjoyment. Take a hungry Man, entertain him with all the Gratifications of the other Senses, lay before his Eyes the most agreeable Mixture of the beautifullest Colours, feed them with every Thing that is magnificent, curious and pleasing to the Sight, charm his Ear with the Voice of the sweetest Singer, and add thereto all the most ravishing Sounds of Musick: Yet none of these touch an empty Stomach, and the Cravings of that Appetite make the Man restless, and put him in mind that
he

he wants something else. So afford the Person spoken of here all the Pleasures of Sin and Sense, the Honours, Greatness and Splendor of a Crown; let the other Wishes of his Heart flow in upon him, and be secured from running out again; give him the Ornaments of Knowledge, Learning and Wit, yea, Immortality and Heaven it self: If Holiness were not there, the Hunger after Righteousness would not be amused and contented with all these; for he hath a Desire after Holiness, which nothing but it self can satiate and fill up, and he that is not in such a Case is but a vain Pretender to be *hungring and thirsting after Righteousness*.

But, 3dly. As *Hunger* and *Thirst* are by far the most vehement and sharpest of all our Appetites, when they become excessive; so the *blessed* Person here spoken of must have Desires after Righteousness superior to all his other Wishes, he must not only seek it, but do it in the first Place, his whole Soul must run out after it; yea, he summons together all the Powers of his Spirit, and every Thing that is within him, which all joyn together and unite to make up one ardent vehement Desire after *Righteousness*. He loves, values, esteems nothing besides; and flies with as much Speed to it, as the hungry Eagle when hastning to its Prey. Let us imagine a voracious Animal long restrained from Food or Water, how eagerly will it run, with what Greediness, towards its beloved Prey? And with as ardent Wishes must he, who *hungers and thirsts after Righteousness*, aspire unto it; his Eye, his Mind, and his Soul must be wholly fixed upon it.

And

And *Lastly*. He that *hungers* this way, is as diligent in every Mean, as earnestly lays hold of every Opportunity whereby he may attain to further Degrees in Religion, as the Man that is dying for Thirst, will search for a Spring where he hopes to find it. Nor can there be any Thing more foolish and absurd, than for any Person to pretend to this Temper of Mind, who is lazy and unactive, and does not try all Ways to gain this Righteousness.

The Argument to prove that such Persons, who have these enlarged vigorous Desires after Righteousness, are blessed, *For they shall be filled*. God will not be wanting to them, but will regard their Cries, and shower down upon their Souls Influences of his Grace from the *Habitation of Holiness*, and will carry them on from Strength to Strength, till they appear before the Lord in Zion; and the more they desire, the farther will he advance them in the Ways of Religion and Truth. And with what an Excess of Joy and Satisfaction will their Hunger be satisfied? How mighty a Pleasure must it be to a Person that loves Holiness better than his Life, to find that God is adorning him with it? And he who wishes for nothing so much as the Perfection of Purity, what Satisfaction must he feel, in making continually a farther Progress in it, and taking larger Steps towards that Place where is nothing to be seen but the Beauty of Holiness? What a ravishing Comfort and Bliss must it be to him, who hates Sin worse than Death and the Grave, the Sorrow and Torment of whose Life it was that he was so much enslaved and tyrannized by it, to be still subduing the other Lust and Passion, and giving a mortal Wound to his hated abomina-

ted Enemies? Never was there a young ambitious Monarch, who breathed more earnestly after Victory over an insulting Adversary, and rejoiced more in a Triumph over scattered Foes, than the *Hungerer after Righteousness* doth with Gladness *pull down the strong Holds of Satan*, and run without wearying in the Paths of the divine Life.

And the God of Truth hath promised, that never any such shall have reason to complain of a Disappointment, *to him that knocketh it shall be opened*. And though Man, let him thirst after Righteousness never so much, be incapable to fill himself, and *he that is accustomed to do evil cannot learn to do well*; yet, *our heavenly Father* hath declared, Luke xi. 13. that he will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him: And so, though vain be the Help of Man, yet through God they shall do valiantly; and to those who open their Mouth he will fill it. And then, every one that *hungers after Righteousness* shall renew his Strength, and shall mount up with Wings as Eagles, till he arrive at Zion the City of the great King; where he shall be as holy as God commands him to be, as pure as the Cherub and the Seraph; where is an Ocean of Love, and an inexhausted Fountain of Righteousness, and he, being plunged into it, shall be as righteous as he desires and wishes: For, what Happiness, what Joys can the Understanding of an Angel conceive greater, than for the whole Soul to be employed in the quickest and most earnest hungring after Righteousness, and yet, to have the smallest Remain of this Appetite eternally filled to the Brim? And then, the Rivers of the purest ravishing Pleasures must necessarily, and naturally, intermix themselves

with

with all the Streams of Righteousness, which will ever overflow the *hungry thirsty Soul*.

VII. *Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain Mercy.*

The *merciful* are such as have a tender compassionate Disposition of Soul, towards a Person in the smallest Degree of Misery. He cannot look upon any of his Fellow-creatures labouring under Misfortune and Trouble, destitute of the Means of a comfortable Subsistence ; injured in his Reputation, good Name and Estate ; or under the Pressures of a painful Disease ; but he is moved with Bowels of Pity and Tenderness. He is so far from being like these inhumane unnatural Monsters, who can sport with the Troubles of others, and take Pleasure in their Hardships and Sufferings : That he is not able to look upon them with an indifferent Eye, and refrain from being concerned ; but sympathizes with them, and rolls a Part of their Burdens upon himself. *Job* gives us a lively Example of the merciful Man, *Job xxx. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in Trouble ? Was not my Soul grieved for the poor ?* And he can say in some Measure, with respect to all Men, with the Psalmist, *Psal. xxxv. 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my Clothing was Sackcloth : I humbled my Soul with Fasting, and my Prayer returned into mine own Bosom.*

But, 2^{dly}. The truly *merciful Man* employs the Talents and Abilities he is Master of to relieve the miserable, and raise up these who are bowed down. It is a very brazen Impudence, though too commonly to be met with, for a Person to pretend to have a Sympathy with his Neighbour, and yet

put himself to no Pains or Charge that he may prove helpful to his Wants: To be shedding useless Tears, and making deceitful Groans; while he hath a Hand, by stretching out of which his poor Neighbour, whom he pretends to pity, might be really comforted. *James ii. 15. If a Brother or Sister be naked or destitute of daily Food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in Peace, be you warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not these Things which are needful to the Body, what doth it profit?* But the truly merciful, if he see a helpless Stranger, is given to Hospitality; if one in Poverty, he extendeth his Charity. That Man can have but little of a tender compassionate Temper, who can behold his Fellow-creature, and much more a Christian, in Want, and he in the mean Time be wallowing in an Affluence of all Things: No, he will rather reduce himself to what is necessary from what is pleasing and convenient, to relieve the hungry and naked.

And then, when he beholds injured Innocence run down with Calumny and Reproach, and his Neighbour's good Name taken from him, and his Honour wounded by the lying, malicious or uncharitable Tongue; he does not think it enough to stand by without a Share in the Guilt, but takes every Opportunity to do him Justice, free him from Misrepresentations, and set him right again in the Eyes of the World: And that, though he himself might suffer in his own Credit, and possibly partake of the Reproach; for I think he hath but a small Claim to a pitying merciful Disposition, who never shews it, but when he is clear of all Danger, and hazards nothing himself. If the blessed Jesus had, like us, been deterred by his Dangers

Dangers and Sufferings, the *Scorn and Contradiction* of Sinners, from pitying us, where should now have been our Habitation?

And *lastly*. The merciful have a diffusive Compassion of an unbounded Extent: He not only sorrows with the unfortunate, but also with these who have had a hand in their Ruin, and brought it down upon their own Heads; the worst of Sinners share of his Tenderness: So he considers that *he is also in the Body*, and trusts in a Redeemer who had Bowels for the most hainous Transgressors. When he beholds foolish unthinking Men running to their eternal Destruction, and making omnipotent Power their Enemy, *his Eyes run down with Tears*, both out of regard to the Dishonour done to his God, and also from Compassion to his Fellow-creatures; and, moved hereby, he contributes what he can to reclaim him from his Madness, and rejoyceth to save a Sinner from Death. And then, he himself is ready to forgive others their Injuries and Offences, does not retain angry Resentments, nor meditates Revenge; but takes a Pleasure to pardon and pity.

The Blessing promised to the *merciful* is, that *they shall obtain Mercy*. And that either respects this Earth, where such a Person, if, by the frequent Vicissitudes of an unstable World, he become unfortunate and miserable, then he is likely to meet with Sympathy and Compassion to alleviate his Hardships; and *according to the Measure where-with he mete, it shall be measured to him again*: Whereas the merciless Man, who had no Bowels, will fall unregreted, unlamented; as undesired, and as little regarded, as he was unconcerned about o-

thers while flourishing in the Bloom of his Prosperity.

But principally a reconciled God will shew Mercy to his Soul, he'll cover his Sins, and pardon his Transgressions; he'll have Pity upon him, *helpless wallowing in his own Blood, and cast over him a Garment of everlasting Loving-kindness*; he will overlook his Weaknesses and Infirmities, and raise him from Hell the worst of Miseries, to Heaven the highest Good, and there for ever crown his Head with the sure Mercies of *David*. And thus, though a Creature, and much more a Sinner, can never plead Merit; yet God allows it as a good Argument in Prayer, and a Ground of spiritual Courage and Confidence, *forgive us our Debts as we forgive our Debtors*.

And indeed the *merciful* Man is, of all others, beautified the most with that amiable Part of the divine Image, which is the Glory of his Gospel, Mercy and Grace: He herein imitates a compassionate God, and the redeeming Love of a Saviour; and practically admires, adores and shews forth the Praises of the tender Mercies of God, which shine with so illustrious a Brightness in the Face of the Messiah. So that you see the Proportion betwixt the Virtue and the Blessing promised to it, since such a Person is of all others most fitted for complying with the Terms of a Covenant of Mercy. While, on the other hand, 'tis hard to conceive, how an inhumane cruel Person, or one that is not of a pitying Disposition, ready to pardon Offences, help the injured and miserable, can ever be a Follower of Jesus, and love and serve him for his Mercy and Grace, while in Works he denies them. A merciless Christian is the worst of Mon-

Monsters, dost thou ow, that thou art out of Hell to Mercy? are all thy Hopes, thy only Refuge, in it? and is it the Glory of thy God and Saviour? and yet, takest thou no Care thy self to be merciful?

Let us then, *as the Elect of God, put on Bowels of Mercy, be kind to one another; tender-hearted, forgiving one another: Remembring that dreadful Sentence, James ii. 13. He shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy.*

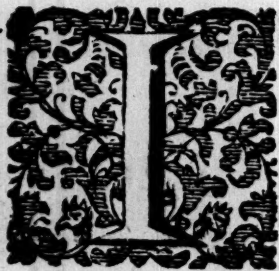




LECTURE III.

MATTH. V.

8. *Blessed are the pure in Heart: for they shall see God.*
9. *Blessed are the Peace-makers: for they shall be called the Children of God.*
10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*
11. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*
12. *Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*



T is the uninterrupted Voice of the rational Nature, *who will shew us any Good?* And Happiness is the general Pursuit which all Mankind are employed in: But, alas, how few have so much as just Notions of true undeceiving Bliss? And how infinitely far then, must the Generality of Pretenders to it be from follow-

following these Measures whereby it is only to be attained? The most numerous Part eagerly grasp at vain empty Phantoms, the Shew of which dazzles their Eyes, while they are destitute of Reality, that can satisfy the Wishes and fill the Desires of the capacious Soul. We may see, and we may feel, how easily foolish Men are captivated by the Charms of Sin, and the perishing Allurements of a fading Life, which an artful Devil dresses up in all their Pomp and Gaiety; and by these specious Colours, wherewith he paints them over, hides their Deformity and Nothingness. It were good for such, how great soever a Misfortune it may be, that their being mistaken in their Choice, and that a missing Happiness in such Things as they fancied contained it, were all their Loss, and that they were only like the Dreamer, mentioned, *Isaiah xxix: 8. Who dreameth, and behold he eateth and drinketh, but he awaketh, and his Soul is empty and faint:* For the highest and most refined Pleasures of Wickedness are not only destitute of valuable Good, but extremely dangerous; and he who makes them his Portion, rolls a Morsel under his Tongue, which, however sweet and delicious it may be while there, will at length prove *Rottenness in the Bones*, and be *bitter in the Belly*. Sin and its Delights are far from being empty: They are indeed without the least Remains of durable Blessedness; but then they are big and swelled with Poison and Death: All the Profits and Possessions of Cheat and Cunning, the Mirth and Amusements of thoughtless Men, the Pleasures of a licentious Dissoluteness, the Pomp and Honours of Greatness, whatever Face they may put on now, are in themselves *Coals of Fire and Brimstone*, which Death will in a little Time kindle, and

and blow up into a devouring and an eternal Flame; and Sinners who now so fondly dote on them, and hug them in their Bosoms, shall then be as closely surrounded by them. Miserable Mankind! to be so fatally cheated, and so blindly caught in the Snare: But blessed, *with our Souls and all that is within us*, be our God and Redeemer, that he himself should come down upon Earth to be our Prophet, and from his own Mouth answer the Question, *who will shew us any Good?* By giving us just Notions of our great Interests; and by teaching us the Paths of Immortality, while we were so far wandering out of the Way; and by pointing out to us a Happiness, which will no other ways cheat us, but by its being incomparably nobler than our most ambitious Wishes, and above the most lively Imagination. The great Importance and Dignity of the Subject, and the Authority and Goodness of the Speaker, ought to command an affectionate Attention to his Words, and induce us to examine seriously and with Consideration, if God be not indeed *our chiefest Joy, and the Light of his Countenance* the only Good.

Our Saviour, in this Chapter, gives us several different Views of the Blessedness of true Religion. That his Discourse might be more useful, and his Doctrine pressed home upon his Hearers with the greater Evidence and Force, he lays before us the principal Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life, with peculiar Rewards annexed to each of them, suitable to their several Natures: Upon a former Occasion or two of discoursing from this Place, I endeavoured to explain the first seven Verses, and shall now go on to the eighth.

VIII. Bless-

VIII. *Blessed are the pure in Heart: for they shall see God.*

We have here, 1. The Persons pronounced happy, *blessed are the pure in Heart.* 2dly. The Argument to prove that they are so, *for they shall see God.*

The Word *Heart* is used in Scripture to express a considerable Variety of Purposes: But it seems to be plain enough that, in this *Verse*, we are to take it in its most ordinary and extensive Meaning, for the inward Part of Man in general; these concealed Affections, Inclinations or Desires, which are covered from the Eyes of others; these hidden Recesses of the Soul, which are pierced into only by that God, who *searcheth the Reins, and before whom Darkness shineth with the Brightness of Light.*

Purity may either be opposed to that which is mixed or composed of different Substances, or to Filth and Pollution. In the first View thereof it points out to us that honest Plainness of Manners, and that Simplicity and Sincerity in our Management, which are so much the Ornament of a Christian; contrary to the Diffimulation of the *double-minded Man*, spoken of by *James*, as *unstable in all his Ways*. The Person endued with this Grace hath not two Designs, one whereof he really pursues, and only pretends the other to impose upon Mankind, and the better to gain his hidden Purpose; no, he moves in a regular uniform Course, and so is fixed and steady: He doth not caress his Neighbours with flattering Professions of Friendship and Esteem, while true Love to them doth not animate and put Life into his Professions: He abhors the *false and deceitful Tongue*, but *speaketh*
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the Truth as it is in his Heart: And Uprightness and Integrity run through the whole of his Conduct, and raise him above exercising any of the low mean Arts of Trick and Cunning, which so much prevail in the World, and are honoured with the Name of Prudence; no, *his Wisdom is from above*, and so is *pure, peaceable, gentle, and easie to be intreated.*

This *Purity of Heart* is also very directly opposed to Hypocrisie in Matters of Religion, which is the most impudent unreasonable Deceit. He does not make a Cloke of his Devotion, as did the *Pharisees*, to cover their selfish and worldly Purposes; nor debases Religion from its divine Original, by making it an Engine and Tool to advance his Reputation or Interest; nor pretends that the Glory of God moves him, while the Applause of Men is the secret Spring which turns his Life: But his most zealous Professions of Christianity, of his Love to God and the Redeemer, are the Voice of his Heart, and not only the Breath of his Mouth. The *Scribes and Pharisees*, whose absurd Explications and narrow Notions of the divine Law our Saviour principally eyes and refutes in this Sermon, were only busied about the *outward Man*, that it might look beautiful and glorious; an external Religion was what they recommended to their Hearers, and enforced by their own Practice, while they had but a little Regard to the Soul and what was within: But the truly blessed Person is of a quite different Complexion, the Love of God and the Laws of the Redeemer govern within his Breast, and reign in his Heart; his Spirit is the Seat of the divine Life, and the Light of religious Performances or good Works, which shines
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before Men, are only some Sparks of that pure Fire of Love to his Saviour, which burns with a brighter Fervency in the Retirements of his Soul. And such a Man, when God at the great Day will disclose our Hearts before Angels and Men, when the most quiet and silent Breathings of the Soul will be as loudly proclaimed in that great Assembly, as our noisy clamorous Professions while in this World, undisguised Piety and undissembled Holiness will be found in every Corner of his Heart, for he is *all pure and glorious within*.

But then, as I have mentioned, Purity is also opposed to any Defilement or Uncleaness which spot and stain the Thing. Nothing can be imagined more vile and loathsom, and covered over with more nauseous Pollutions, than the Heart of an ungodly Sinner: The Description given of *Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 2. very well agrees to it, *The Habitation of Devils, and the Hold of every foul Spirit, and a Cage of every unclean and hateful Bird*; for every Corner of it is defiled with some base Lust or other, *the Vomit of a Dog*, and *the Mire* in which the voluptuous Sow wallows, are every where scattered throughout it, and it is utterly despoiled of that divine Beauty which is the Ornament of Innocence. Now the *pure in Heart*, are sanctified and washed from these, having their *Hearts sprinkled with pure Water*: Being made meet for becoming *Temples to the living God*, they are cleansed from these evil Thoughts and vile Affections, from these impure Lusts and sordid Desires, from these raging furious Passions which pollute the Soul. As they don't defile their Bodies with the Pollutions of Life, so their Souls are not stained with unclean Thoughts and filthy Imaginations; in which many

ny wallow and indulge their Corruption, though they may be restrained by other Motives from proceeding further. In the pure Spirit are not to be found these debased Affections which are such a Disgrace to the Dignity of our immortal Spirits, and a Blemish on our Reason; yea, the Seeds and Fuel to these Lusts are in a great Measure swept away, and it is purified, made white and tried. Here the cruel Fire of Malice, Envy and Revenge does not burn, and cause these terrible Convulsions wherewith they shake such Souls as are under their Dominion. These raging Passions send forth such a Multitude of poisonous noisom Vapours, that they darken the Understanding and choke our Reason, and are as hurtful to the Mind as the most noxious and unhealthy Steams can be to the Body: But the holy Spirit of God, when it blows upon a Soul, purifies it from all these, makes the Air in which it breathes so clear and serene, that it can see its true Honour and Interest, and discern the Paths wherein it ought to walk. Such a Person enjoys a divine Calm within his Breast, and the Devil cannot raise these furious Storms and Tempests to disturb him, which the Soul, where Anger, Impatience and Hatred dwell, is every Moment subjected to.

And then this *Purity is in the Heart*. A wicked unrenewed Man may upon some Occasions, and at first View appear to be clean and pure, like Water while the Mud is fallen to the Bottom of it; but then its Filth still remains, though concealed, and when it is stirred up by a Temptation, he then becomes like the troubled Sea ever throwing up Mire and Dirt: Whereas the blessed Person is in a great Measure washed clean from the Seeds and Dregs of
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of Impurity, and his Lusts and Passions are really deprived of their Dominion, so that they can't reign without Controul in his Soul.

And then *lastly. The Pure in Heart*, is not only cleansed from the grosser Pollutions of Vice, but from the most refined of them ; all low mean Desires after the World, its Riches, Honours, or any Thing that is unbecoming Immortality. His Affections and Wishes soar aloft above the Clouds, and are never stopped in the Way, till they arrive at God *their chiefest Joy*. They become like the *Silver*, which hath not only Filth and Spots rubbed off from its Outside, but which is *seven Times tried in the Fire*, as God promiseth *Isa. i. 25. And I will turn my Hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy Dross, and take away all thy Tin.*

The Reward to be bestowed on such, is, that *they shall see God*. This Phrase often expresses in Scripture the enjoying of God, and the Happiness which flows from his Presence. Thus it signifies, *Heb. xii. 14. Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord. Psal. xxxiv. 8. O taste and see that the Lord is good ; feel and experience him to be so.* And indeed, the Blessedness of the future State will, in a great Measure, consist in that enlarged Knowledge of the infinite Being, which the Saints shall then be exalted to. And there seems to be a particular Proportion, a natural Connexion betwixt this Grace, *Purity of Heart*, and the Reward *seeing God*. The great Reason why Men entertain such mistaken Notions of him, and have so little Knowledge of their Maker, flows from their Pollution ; that purest Light is choked by the Defilements of a wicked Soul ; their irregular Appetites, and their Lusts and Passions, raise Clouds and Mists which hinder

hinder them from perceiving the Truth, and cover them with Ignorance and Error : Now, when these are removed, the Person begins to see Things as they are, the Excellency of Religion and the endearing Amiableness of God shine in upon his Soul, convince and perswade him: When he is freed from these Prejudices, the Shadows of Darkeness which flee away, his Heart is made clean, he will naturally make the higher Advances in the Knowledge of the divine Nature and Excellencies:

It is true, while upon Earth, there is a great deal of Dross, and many Remains of Corruption cleaving to the best, so that they can know but in Part: But when at length we shall be purified into a Fittedness for Heaven, we shall then *see him as he is*. It is not possible for us now to have suitable Notions of that elevated Vision of God, which Immortality will afford us: But this we are assured of, that it will easily exceed the highest Attainments of the most advanced Saint upon Earth, in its enlarged Extent, Evidence and Constancy; a Sight of God, freed from the Imperfections, the Toil and Uneasiness which attend any small Measures of Knowledge, which we can attain to here after a great deal of Labour and Pains. How bright and glorious a Day! when God himself shall be our Sun, and will ever shine with an invariable Brightness; where the heavenly Air is ever calm and serene, and our Hearts are fully purified from the least Remain of any Thing which may beget Mists and Clouds to hide him from our Souls; when the infinite Amiableness of our God, and the divine Beauty of all his Ways, will pierce into our innermost Thoughts with such a pleasing Force,

Force, as to leave no Room for Dispute and Debate as to their incomparable Excellency. And with what an Excess of Satisfaction, will that purest Light insinuate it self into all the Windings of our Understanding? Our Minds will be then much enlarged, and rendred vastly capacious; yet, how will they be all filled with a Throng of the noblest Truths, which will uninterruptedly crowd into the Soul from the great Fountain of them, without the least Confusion or Disorder? Let us consider, if learned Men upon Earth, who know so little and err so much, yet feel so great Delight in the Discovery of any Truth which they search into; if the great Mathematician exclaimed with such a keen Joy, when he had found out a trifling Proportion betwixt Things that had no Connexion with his eternal Interests: Think then, with what a mighty Pleasure the enlightened elevated Soul shall, with open Eyes, look upon God himself, the original, the only the universal Truth, and in him see all that is glorious and great: With what an unconceivable Relish and Joy, will it take a Survey of all his Perfections, and behold them complete in Harmony and Agreement, and see the noble Design and Contrivance of all his Works: When all their Doubts shall be satisfied, and all their Disputes put to an eternal End; when the Clouds will be fully blown away; and when the darkest Parts of divine Providence, the Confusions of an unsettled World, the Persecution of the Righteous, and the Prosperity of Wickedness, shall appear full of Wisdom and Beauty? With how ardent a Love and pleasing Admiration, will the wondring adoring Soul look at and run over this glorious Scheme? And the Eye, which, like all

the other Senses, still wants something more perfect in its Object, shall then, and not till then, be fully satisfied with seeing; for it *shall see God*.

I cannot stay upon this noble Subject, and shall only add this one Thing, which will give us a very plain and clear Notion of the inconceivable Blessedness which must flow from this Vision, which the Saints shall then have of God. If we reflect upon our selves, we shall find, that the Discovery of the Excellencies of any Person affects us differently according to the Relation we stand in to him. If he be our Enemy and we hate him, it will then prove uneasie and troublesom to us; because we dread them as they are armed against us: And thus the *Devils*, while they see and believe, they *tremble*. But, on the other hand, if the Person be our Friend, every Perfection we discover in him is attended with Joy; because we love him, and know they will be employed on our Behalf: And the more intimate our Friendship be, the greater must this Satisfaction prove. And if it be so, think if your Imagination can stretch it self to fancy a more enlarged Happiness than this Reward of *the pure in Heart, to see God*, that omnipotent Being, whose Power is infinite, and his Hand full of irresistible Might, which in a Moment can create new Worlds, or shake the old one into nothing: And, at the same Time, to be sure that *these everlasting Arms are underneath them*, to be their Guard and Support. How ravishing must it be, to behold unbounded Knowledge and perfect Understanding employed to promote their Joy, and contrive their Bliss, that it may be without Blemish: To look at inexhausted Compassions and Mercy, which never ends; and to feel that these

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Sources of infinite Goodness are opened to overflow them; and that they are the Persons through whose Souls these *Streams*, which make glad the City of our God, will run with the strongest Current: In a Word, to see God, and to see that he is their God, and will be so for ever and ever? This purest Light will fill the whole Saint, while every Ray of it will fly upon the Wings of Joy, and carry alongst with it Pleasure and Satisfaction, inestimable ravishing Blessedness. But then, may we remember, that these only who *wash their Hands in Innocence*, and have no Dissimulation or Double-mindedness, can ever attain it: And that *every one who hath this Hope, purifieth himself even as God is pure.*

IX. *Blessed are the Peace-makers: for they shall be called the Children of God.*

This Grace, which belongs to the *Peace-makers*, may point out a Person's Temper and Management, either as it more directly respects himself, or as it relates to his Neighbours. In the first Regard, it points him out to be of a quiet peaceable Disposition of Mind, ready to cultivate a good Correspondence with every Person he may have occasion to converse with, to endear himself to them by all the good Offices of Friendship and Love, without being easily inflamed into a Resentment of supposed, or even real, Injuries and Affronts done him: Who is not soon provoked to Revenge, or blown up into Anger; but, having the Mastery of these Passions, esteems it a greater Honour to pardon and forgive his Neighbour's Trespases: To such a Person *Peace* is one of his greatest Joys, which he pursues with the utmost

Eagerness, and earnestly follows the Things which lead to it. And so this Grace hath a near Connexion, and is much of the same Nature, with these peaceable Virtues, *Meekness and Poverty of Spirit*, which are the greatest Enemies of Hatred, Contention and Strife; and the firmest Foundations of universal Peace and good Will: And make Men sociable, easie and affable in the whole of their Conversation; cautious in every Part of their Conduct, that they may avoid giving Offence to Jew or Greek, or to the Church of God; and ready to bear even with the Weaknesses of others; and their Follies which are not criminal.

This sweet peaceable Disposition of our own Mind, and a Management agreeable thereto, may be natively enough understood by the *Greek Word* used in this Text: Though our Translators seem to have confined its Meaning to the other Thing included in this Grace, *namely*, a constant and vigorous Endeavour to maintain and promote Peace amongst others. He who is animated by this Virtue, won't be satisfied that himself is free from blowing the Fire of Discord and Contention, which may rage about him; but, as he looks upon Envy, Strife, and an alienated angry Mind, to be in their own Nature hateful, and the great Enemies to the Joy and Happiness of Mankind, and that they are so unlike to the noble Temper which glades the Society of the Blessed, so he will take always a true Pleasure in contributing his good Offices to preserve or restore Unity amongst Brethren; he will catch at every Opportunity, and employ the best Methods he can, to compose Differences amongst them, and to sweeten and calm these Minds that may be sowed and irritated against one another; he

he will believe that he hath such a Share in every Quarrel which happens, as should engage him to interest himself in any Measure that may conduce to end it amicably. And thus a Reconciler is the Character he glories in, and endeavours to live up to: And he is animated with a peculiar Zeal this way, with respect to the greater Divisions which happen either in Church or State, where Union is most advantageous and shines with the greatest Beauty, and Discord is attended with the most fatal Consequences. Such a Man is the *Peace-maker*.

But then we must not mistake this Grace for Cowardice and Faint-heartedness. A Softness and Effeminacy of Mind may induce to yielding, peaceable Measures, Persons that are utterly destitute of this Virtue, which is very consistent with the keenest Courage and steadiest Firmness in a good Cause: So that such Persons as can behold their Religion or Liberty assaulted, and in Hazard of being torn from them, with a lazy Indifference; or who neglect pursuing any Methods, which may be proper for them, in order to a vigorous maintaining of these inestimable Blessings, and are ready to submit still to those who are uppermost, and then cloke themselves with a Pretext of a peaceable quiet Disposition; are not to be reckoned amongst the *Peace-makers* who are blessed, but will be numbred with the *fearful and unbelieving*.

The Reward annexed to this Grace, is, *they shall be called the Children of God*. What infinite and admirable Goodness shines forth in this inestimable Privilege, that these who were the Children of Wrath and Hell, should be so vastly exalted, as to become the Sons of God and the Heirs of Heaven?

And what can we desire better, than to be joyned in so near and affectionate a Relation to him who is infinite in Strength and Riches, who alone can make happy and safe, *at whose right Hand dwells Fulness of Joy*; and who hath the highest Tenderness for his Children, being as great in Love as in Power, and incomparably readier to pour down Blessings upon them than they are to ask them? not only to be his Sons as they are born of his Power, and subjected to his Authority; but as they are begotten again by his redeeming loving Kindness, and created anew by his victorious Grace, that they may remain for ever the Objects of the Endearments of such a Father?

They shall be called, they shall really become the Children of God. This Phrase hath a peculiar Strength in it, and I take this to be the Force and Meaning thereof, *namely*, that they should not only be indeed possessed of this Dignity, but that this Grace would impress such evident Characters hereof upon the *Peace-makers*, that all would be obliged thereby to own and call them the Children of God. And, indeed, this happy Disposition is so God-like, that it naturally proves such who are endued with it to be the Offspring of him, who is so frequently stiled *the God of Peace*. This is very clearly illustrated by what Christ says, John xiii. 35. *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another, and such are the Peace-makers.* This Phrase is used with respect to our Saviour, Luke i. 32. *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.*

And then at the Consummation of Things, the last Judgment, the God of Love will own them for his: And all the holy Angels who compose that
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harmonious Society above, where Love and an eternal Peace reign in their Perfection, and spread immortal and uninterrupted Satisfaction over them, will acknowledge the *Peace-makers* to be Heaven-born: And our *elder Brother* will *confess them* before that solemn Assembly; whence they shall be carried, to be for ever Inhabitants of that Place, where the smallest Remains of a divided and alienated Mind are utterly banished, and where is nothing that can disturb the perfect Serenity, nor cool the endless Friendship and Love.

X. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The former *Verses* treat principally of the active Graces of the Christian Life and their Advantages, and this with the two following *Verses* speak directly of the passive or suffering ones; and are big with the strongest Comforts and Encouragements, to such as *through many Tribulations make their Way to the Kingdom*. This was a very seasonable Doctrine to be deeply inculcated by our blessed Saviour on his Hearers: For, as in all Ages, the Followers of the Redeemer are to *take up their Cross* when they engage in his Service, and to resolve upon shewing the Sincerity of their Love and Obedience by a sacrificing of Ease and Comfort, yea, of Life it self, when the divine Providence may call for that Proof of it from them; so Christianity, when in its Spring, was assaulted with the greatest Fury, and met with the most vigorous Opposition from the wise and great, the Philosophy of *Greece* and the Empire of *Rome* combined to destroy it in the Bud, and so the first Preachers and Professors of the Christian Name, had the sur-

est Grounds to lay their Account with *Persecution*, and a *resisting even unto Blood*. Wherefore it was meet for our Redeemer, to arm his Disciples with a steady Resolution, and a firm Faith not to be conquered by these Evils: Which he accomplishes very effectually in these *Verses*, by shewing, that, however frightful the Terrors of Death and of Torture were in themselves, how disagreeable soever to human Nature and seemingly disadvantageous, yet, they really tended to the Honour and contributed to the lasting Blessedness of the Sufferers for Righteousness sake.

It is not needful for me to descend to any of the Particulars wherein this *Righteousness* consists. Those *suffer for the sake of it*, who undergo Tribulations for the Profession of the Christian Name, and a steady Perseverance therein; for the avouching themselves to be the faithful Subjects of Messiah the King, and refusing to disown him for the Lord and Redeemer, when urged to it by wicked and unreasonable Men: Such also who endure Persecution for their Adherence to any of the divine Institutions, how small soever they may be, or for refusing to own as Truth what hath not his sacred Authority stamped upon it; who won't comply with the Religion of the Court and the Humour of the Times, when they are contrary to pure undisguised Christianity. In a Word, they *suffer for Righteousness sake*, who chuse to undergo it, rather than do any Thing, of what Nature soever it may be, which is in the least disagreeable to the Dictates of right Reason, or the Power and Precepts of Religion: And so, these who fall a Sacrifice for the Liberties of their Country, and in maintaining its just Rights; who won't bow to

Tyranny, or give that absolute Submission to a Mortal which is due only to God, may be truly said to suffer for Righteousness sake, and acquire a Title to the Reward, provided that they suffer as Christians, moved to it by the Duty they owe to God and their Redeemer, and animated by Love to him, and with that Temper and Disposition, so regulated and managed as the Gospel directs. For we must be exceeding careful that we don't impose upon our selves in this Matter, and so, after all our Hardships, miss the Reward: If it be for an ill-founded Opinion and groundless Fancy, a mistaken Notion of our own, if we be hurried on by Pride and Self-conceit, if vain Glory and the Love of Applause be the Springs which move us, and a Regard merely to our own Honour and Reputation, it is then Folly and Obstinacy, and not Christian Fortitude which endangers us.

But further, a Person may suffer for the sake of the Practice, as well as for the Profession and Defence of true Religion; when he is exposed to Hatred and Contempt, *is made the Song of the Drunkards, and the Mirth of the foolish*; because he will not run to the same Excesses of Riot with them. And is reproached as an Hypocrite, or laughed at as weak and simple, because he shuns these Freedoms which the licentious or the careless and cold Christian practise; when he abhors Flattery and Falshood, which are too oft the Steps whereby Men climb to Riches and Honours, and will rather lose all these Advantages than abandon his Honesty and Integrity; and, in a Word, when he still chuses rather to please God than Men, however so much his temporal Interest may depend upon the Pursuit of different Measures.

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It would be superfluous for me to name the several Kinds of *Persecution*. I shall only mention that we can never imagine any so dreadful and severe, let them be the highest Torments which the utmost Stretch of the most subtil and sagacious Cruelty can invent, or the most barbarous Inhumanity can inflict, but it will be certainly true, that *blest are they who are thus persecuted for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

It is observable, that, though every Grace mentioned in these Beatitudes hath a Reward annexed to it, yet, none of them hath the Happiness of Heaven in general added to it, except that of *Poverty of Spirit*, which, as I shewed when explaining it, is one of the leading and most diffusive Virtues of Christianity, and this of *Persecution*. And, indeed it is fitly promised to this, both because of the great Difficulty of suffering aright, and chiefly because that there is scarce a Virtue and Grace but he who is persecuted for Righteousness sake must exercise: He must be animated by a flaming Love, enlivened with a vigorous Faith, supported by the most heroick and bravest Courage, and then calmed and sweetned by Patience and Self-denial. But then such a faithful Soldier of Christ shall certainly be possessed of that *Kingdom*, which is eternal and undisturbed, where are no rebellious Subjects within, nor any Enemies without to invade it: *A Kingdom of Righteousness and Joy, in the midst of which God is, so that it can never be shaken or moved*; where he will with his own Hand surround their Heads with an illustrious *Diadem*, before the Brightness of which the most glorious Crowns upon Earth would look pale and lose their Beauty, which will have all the Honour,

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Dignity and Satisfaction of a Crown, without any Share of the Toils and Cares, of the Thorns and Hazards which attend the greatest Monarch in the World. How soon will they forget the Persecutions they were exposed to upon Earth? All their Tears will in a Moment be swallowed up in the Ocean of divine Love, and their Sorrows be lost in the Rivers of immortal Pleasures which ever overflow Zion the City of our God.

XI. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you; and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

In this Verse he makes particular Mention of one Kind of Persecution they might, amongst others, be assaulted by, Calumny and Reproach: And this is exceedingly grievous to great and generous Minds, which have often been more sensibly affected, and sooner broken by the lying Tongue than by the violent Hand, while they were robbed of their good Name which was their rich Treasure, or exposed to Shame and Ignominy. And this was the hard Fate of the Apostles and their Successors: They were traduced as the Sowers of Sedition, and Enemies to all good Order and Government, because they obeyed God rather than Man; they were branded as Schismatics and Enemies to Moses, because they followed the Simplicity and Spirituality of the noble Gospel-worship, in Opposition to the beggarly Elements and the superstitious Observances of the Jews; and were run down as void of Duty and Regard to the Governors of the Church, because they laid open the Vices and Corruptions of the Scribes and Pharisees, who assumed such a tyrannical Dominion over the Consciences

sciences of Men, and enslaved their Faith. And it is evident to such as have the least Knowledge of Church History, that the primitive Christians were loaded with the Guilt of the most odious and detestable Villanies, so that, as the Apostle tells us, I. Cor. iv. 13. *They were made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things*: And to these Reproaches the sincerely religious are liable unto this Day. But how fully will all this be recompensed at the last Judgment, when God the great Judge will vindicate them in the Face of their Enemies, and beautifie them with Salvation? When these who reproached them shall be for ever silenced, and abandoned to everlasting Shame and Contempt, how will they then be confounded and blush? And what a mighty Pleasure will spread it self over the reviled and reproached Christians, when their Redeemer will then publicly clothe them with the Garments of Joy?

XII. *Rejoyce, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

In this Verse we have a very amazing and emphatical Exhortation, to rejoyce at the Prospect of Death and Danger, to be exceeding glad at the alluring Charms of Torture and cruel Persecution; not only to be contented and submissive under Sufferings, but to take Pleasure in them, and account a tormenting Death the greatest Happiness that could befall us. And yet, this surprising frightful Advice was actually complied with by the Apostles, Acts v. 41. *Who rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for his Name*; and by Paul, II. Cor. xii. 10. *I take Pleasure in Infirmities, in Re-*

Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's sake : And that upon the best and justest Reasons, because the superior Glory that such shall have above other Saints in Heaven, is incomparably more excellent and valuable than their Sufferings are cruel and severe, for great is your Reward in Heaven.

The Martyrs, of whatever kind, whether in their Body, Reputation or Estate, shall be distinguished by an illustrious Character, and dwell in the more glorious Mansions of the Redeemed. They will be brighter Stars, and shine in higher Orbs than others, make nearer Approaches to the Throne, and be more capacious for its Bliss and Joys. Every one who leads a holy Life, will, indeed, have enough of Happiness, they will be like faithful Subjects who will feel and partake of the benign Influences of so noble a Government : But then the suffering Christians will be like victorious Soldiers who follow their General in his Triumph, and partake of that peculiar Honour ; such, as Christ informs us, *Matth. xix. 28*, shall in a special Manner sit with him in Judgment. How vast a Change ! how illustrious a Glory ! when the *Jewish* Accusers, when the *Roman* Governors *Festus* and *Felix*, yea, when *Nero* who possessed the Empire, shall be dragged bound with Chains, and covered with Disgrace, to receive their Sentence from a *Paul*, who once stood at their Judgment-seat. This Honour shall all the numerous Armies of persecuted Martyrs have, *let them rejoyce and be exceeding glad.* * * *



LECTURE IV.

MATTH. VI.

13. *Ye are the Salt of the Earth : but if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under Foot of Men.*
14. *Ye are the Light of the World. A City that is set on an Hill, cannot be hid.*
15. *Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buskel : but on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light unto all that are in the House.*
16. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.*
17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;*

18. *For*

18. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.
19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.
20. For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.



OUR blessed Saviour, in the first Part of his divine Sermon, which I have upon some former Occasions explained, gives his Hearers a just Notion of true undisguised Happiness, in the Pursuit whereof the wise Men had laboured while it fled from them, and the Philosophers disputed themselves out of Breath without any Success: For Mankind had lost it in a Crowd of lying Vanities, the debased Pleasures of Sin and Sense, and the false and flattering Allurements of a perishing World, wherewith they were cheated and amused into their own Ruin and eternal Disappointment. Now the great Prophet of the Church

Church begins with rectifying the mistaken Apprehensions of Men, who fancied that they might attain Blessedness in the Delights, Honours or Profits of this Earth, and accordingly made these their Choice and Aim : And points out to us these Graces and Virtues, which were accompanied with the only rational and enduring Satisfaction ; because they entitled to the Favour and Love of God, the *chiefest Joy*. And as this Doctrine is of the highest Importance, so we ought to have it deeply imprinted upon our Souls continually, that there is nothing under the Sun which is worthy of so much as the Desire of an immortal Spirit ; and that the only valuable Good is treasured up in that Place, where there are Rivers of eternal Pleasures, and Blessings never to have an End.

The serious Conviction hereof would keep us firm and unmoved by any Changes which might befall us while here below, and undisturbed by the Convulsions which shake the Nations : Because none of these can in the smallest Measure affect that Inheritance, which, being uncorruptible in the Heavens, is infinitely removed beyond the Force of these Storms and Tempests which rage in this unsettled World. Did we frequently meditate that the most enchanting Delights of Sin are empty Nothings, and, how beautiful soever their Charms may appear, are yet, only varnished over by false Colours, without any Reality : We would leave them to the ignorant and the blind, while we aspired unto the nobler Advantages of Immortality ; we would never prostitute the Honour and Dignity of a Soul, by stooping to any of the mean low Methods whereby Men advance their temporal

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Interests; nor would we be much concerned what
 Post Providence should assign us upon the Stage
 of Life, whether it should crown us with Prospe-
 rity and an Affluence of its Goods, or try us with
 Adversity and deprive us of its Pleasures. If we
 had the Persuasion that our true Happiness was
 not to be found amongst the Things which are
 temporal, we would be animated by the Power of
 an eternal Life, to direct all our Actions, and our
 whole Conduct, as they stood in a Relation to
 that invisible State; to soar above the Clouds, and
 look down with a noble Disdain and Contempt
 upon the flattering Caresses, or the frightful
 Threatnings which might tempt us to disobey
 God and abandon the Paths of Life. There is
 indeed nothing we should oftner make the Subject
 of our serious Consideration, than this excellent
 Account which our Saviour gives of undeceiving
 Blessedness, that it is not he who wallows in licen-
 tious Pleasures, who stands upon the Pinnacle of Ho-
 nour and Fame, or who dwells amidst a Multitude
 of Riches, who ought to be reputed happy; but
 only he who, being righteous, *hath Hope in his*
Death, and an Assurance of Fulness of Joy after
 it through the endless Ages. And, as this Dis-
 course of Christ's is at all Seasons of the greatest
 Usefulness: So it was in a particular Manner
 necessary to be inculcated upon his Disciples, at a
 Time when their holy Profession was likely to ex-
 pose them to all these Losses and Afflictions, which,
 as the World think, make a Man miserable; and
 to deprive them of the Advantages and Profits of
 a present Life; and upon this account, he insists
 at the greatest Length upon the peculiar Blessings
 which attended *Persecution for Righteousness sake.*

After which, in the first Four of the Verses which I have now read, he seems to direct his Discourse to his Disciples or Apostles in particular; for, though, as will appear in the Explication of them, they contain useful Instruction to every Christian, and that the Design of them is not to be intirely confined to the Apostles; yet, they press in with a peculiar Force upon them, whose Office it was to propagate the Christian Name, and teach others its Doctrines, these were certainly, in a distinguishing Manner, *the Salt of the Earth*, and *the Light of the World*.

What he here speaks to them tends to these two Purposes, *namely*, 1. To comfort them under the numerous Disadvantages that Faithfulness and Vigour in their Duty, might expose them to, and support them against all the various Tribulations they were to lay their Account with in the Discharge of it: By proposing to them the exceeding Usefulness and Glory of their Office, and that, whatever might be the Fancy of the foolish, they were really *the excellent Ones of the Earth*. And, 2^{dly}. To engage them to a Behaviour and Practice, whereby they might live up to the Dignity of so illustrious a Character as they were clothed with, and so avoid the Disgrace and Contempt they must otherwise be exposed to. And this he represents to them by some noble and elegant Metaphores, which carried the greater Force along with them, because of their Plainness and Evidence: For it was felt by every Body how necessary *Salt* was for the Uses of Men, and that *Light* was pleasing and advantageous too.

XIII. *Ye are the Salt of the Earth: but if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under Foot of Men.*

Ye are the Salt of the Earth, or it is your Duty, and the native Tendency of your Character as Christians, and Employment as the Ministers of that Religion, to promote the Interests of Mankind, and conduce to such Purposes with respect to them all, as are naturally held forth by the Uses and Advantages of Salt, which are principally these two. 1. To give a Relish and Agreeableness to such Meats as are very tasteless and insipid, if they be not seasoned therewith. And this Use of Salt we all know is of a very diffusive Extent, there being few of these Things whereby human Life is supported, but Salt is necessary to render them palatable to us: Whence is that Question proposed by Job, vi. 6. *Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without Salt? or is there any Taste in the White of an Egg?* And this holding so generally true, was one Reason, why all the Meat-offerings under the Law were so positively appointed by God to be *seasoned with Salt*. And, agreeably hereto, the Disciples of Christ were very emphatically the *Salt of the Earth*. If we seriously consider it, every Thing amongst Men, their Affections and Desires, their Abilities and Endowments, their Business and Endeavours, without they be seasoned by Religion are altogether tasteless and insipid, lothsom and impure: Which might be made out at great length, if it were proper upon an Occasion of this Nature.

Now the Apostles, whose Business it was to commend, by their Practice and Preaching, true Religion to others, to instruct them in the Christian Faith, and engage them to believe and to comply with its Offers, and run in the Way of God's Commandments, were indeed the Salt of the Earth. They were to be the Instruments of giving an exalted Relish to the Affections of Men, by placing them on Objects that were worthy of them: By making all the Sparks and Fire of their Love to mount up unto God, which were before polluted and debased in the Puddle of Sin and Sense: By restoring the Will to its true and divine Liberty: And by giving the Passions, which were so disagreeable while hurried on by Anger and Revenge, and which, being without any Government, lorded it over our Reason and led us captive at their Pleasure, a true Relish, when restored to their proper Place, and rendred subservient to the nobler Faculty of the Soul, an enlightened Understanding. They were the Persons, who, by subduing Men under the Obedience of Christ, were to season, with Christian Humility and Self-denial, these Ornaments of the Mind, that Wit, Learning and Knowledge, which are so nauseous when prostituted to low Purposes, or stained with Self-conceit, Pride and vain Glory. They were to add an agreeable Taste to Honour and Greatness, yea, to the Glory and Dignity of a Crown, which are rendred so odious and distasteful when accompanied with Insolence and Arrogance, or with a supercilious Neglect and Contempt of others; by salting them, if I may use the Phrase, with Justice, Moderation, a human and accessible Disposition. They were to season a plentiful Estate
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and an Affluence of Riches, by Charity and a well-governed Liberality: And to inspire with a good Savour, Poverty and Adversity themselves, by Contentment, Patience and Resignation. And, in a Word, the Gospel which they preached was the only Thing which could render Men acceptable to God, and make *him smell a good Savour from them*, that they might be *unto God a sweet Savour of Christ*: And this is in some Measure applicable to all true Christians, every one of whom is to contribute, in his Station, to these Purposes by a holy Life.

But 2^{dly}. Another remarkable Use of Salt, is to purifie, cleanse and preserve from Rottenness and Decay. Hence the Stability and Perpetuity of any Thing is represented by it, II. Chron. xiii. 5. *Ought ye not to know, that the Lord God of Israel gave the Kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his Sons by a Covenant of Salt?* And agreeably hereto the Disciples of Jesus are *the Salt of the Earth*, who, by their pure Conversation and holy Doctrine, were to purifie the World from that Corruption and Filth wherein it lay wallowing, and cleanse Men from the Dregs of their sinful Impurities. They were to preserve the Vigour of the Mind, that it might not be weakned by Lusts and Passions, and rendred soft and degenerate, that it might not be cankered by Envy, Malice and Revenge, nor putrified by vile sordid Affections and debased Pleasures. They were to purifie the Understanding from numerous Prejudices which choked it; to dispel the Clouds and Mists wherewith Sin continually surrounds the Soul, that so the divine Light should not be extinguished or diminished by them; and, in general, to perswade

Men to depart from Iniquity, which will infallibly at last prove *Rottenness to the Bones*. They were to salt the Projects and Designs, the Business, Toils and Labours of Men, that they might not putrifie and rot in that Day, when all the Thoughts of the greatest and wisest Sinners shall perish: But that, being regulated by the Precepts of Religion, and governed by the Power of an immortal Life, they might be preserved beyond Death, and not be corrupted by the Grave; but, that, while their Body was made a Feast for the Worms, *their Works*, being thus seasoned, might follow them pure and entire into Eternity; and they at length be possessed of a Happiness as lasting as their Souls, and clothed with a Body which shall put on Incorruption. In a Word, Christians in general are in the properest Sense the Salt of the Earth; for, if it were not for their sake, this Earth would long ago have been dissolved, and burnt up with a fervent Heat.

Our Saviour, having thus shewn his Disciples the excellent Purposes for which he designed them, and the illustriously glorious Character wherewith they were distinguished, in the following Part of the *Verse*, exhorts them to be exceeding careful that they behaved themselves suitable thereto, and endeavoured to answer these noble Ends: And urges it with a double Argument. 1. The Irremediableness of their Condition if they lost their Savour. 2dly. The peculiar heavy Disadvantages that would attend them in such a Case.

But if the Salt have lost its Savour. The Greek Word here used signifies to be infatuated, if the Salt be infatuated or turn silly and foolish: The plain Meaning whereof is, if it be deprived of its Poig-

Boignancy and Acrimony, and rendred unfit for its proper Uses, as a foolish Man is for the Business of Life. Then *wherewith shall it be salted*: There is nothing which can be imagined to recover it to its Vigour and Force again, or render it savoury, because it is it self alone which ought to work that Effect upon other Things. Salt is a Remedy for unsavoury Meats, and can make the most insipid Thing agreeable to the Taste: But if Salt it self should lose its Taste, Sharpness and Quickness, there is no Cure for it. And, in like manner, if the Disciples and Ministers of Christ should lose their Savour, they are in the most desperate and incurable Condition. If such who were appointed to be so useful and beneficial to the World, neglect their Work, and suffer those they might have had Access to render seasoned with Grace, to instruct by their Teaching and animate by their pious Example, to remain still unseasoned, blind and corrupted: If, instead of casting a lively Copy of Holiness and Purity to excite an Emulation thereof in others, they be themselves filthy and unclean, and so rather ensnare to Vice than stir up to Virtue: If these who are to teach others the Paths of Immortality themselves, wander out of the Way; and, instead of being humble and holy, meek and temperate, self-denied and mortified to this World, be proud and polluted, be passionate and dissolute, be as fond of Esteem and Applause, and as eager in Pursuit of the Honours or Profits of the present Life, as others: They all *lose their Savour, and wherewith shall they be salted?* the Case of such Men is irrecoverable, or at the least removed to the Extremity of Danger. Others who lay corrupted and pu-

trifling amongst the common Herd of Sinners, had still some Ground of Hope left with them; because they might possibly come to be seasoned by those who were *the Salt of the Earth*: But as for them who are here likened to *unsavoury Salt*, who not only had the Means of Grace, Knowledge and Opportunities; but had it as their peculiar Commission to season others, and spread their good Influences as far as they could; if such, notwithstanding that holy Doctrine which they preached, and by adding to *which* the Power of an agreeable Practice they were to become *the Salt of the Earth*, should yet lose their Relish and become nauseous, putrified and corrupted, there could remain nothing to renew their Savour; since the only Means, whereby God designed to *salt the Earth* and reform others, were already lost without any Effect upon them. Such having been *once enlightened*, and made *Partakers of the holy Ghost*, and not only *tasted the good Word of God*, but preached it to others, *if they fall away it is scarce possible to renew them again*. And, indeed, universal Experience convinces us, that Apostates, either from the Faith or Practice of Christianity, who once made fair Professions, or were invested with the sacred Character, go to the greatest Extremities, are seldom or never reclaimed. Such Men had particular Arguments to preserve their *Savour* beyond others, the Pretensions they made to Religion, and the Holiness of their Office, were special Curbs to restrain their Corruption, and were Out-guards to their Innocence: And, as it argues the Flood of Vice in them to be strong and rapid, when it is able to break over these Bounds; so, when once it hath prevailed thus far, it will run with the most violent

lent Torrent, and is not likely to be easily stopped, *If the Salt lose its Savour wherewith shall it be salted?*

2dly. Our Redeemer perswades his Disciples to a solicitous Care *that they lose not their Savour*, from their utter Unprofitableness in such a Case, and the Height of Ignominy and Contempt which would be poured out upon them; and this he expresses in the strongest Terms. Other Things, if they corrupt, are still useful for some lower Purpose; putrified Flesh, though improper for a Feast, is fit enough for a *Dunghil*: But, if Salt so far degenerate as to become unmeet for these Purposes for which it is directly intended, the seasoning and preserving of other Things, cannot be employed for so much as that sordid Use; as Christ more fully tells us, *Luke xiv. 34: Salt is good; but if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the Land, nor yet for the Dunghil.* And thus an unsavoury Disciple of Christ is the most useless and insignificant Thing imaginable. Such who were never Preachers of the Gospel, nor made large Professions of Religion by their Wit, Learning and other Accomplishments, may prove in some small Measure advantageous and profitable to a Society, and have Esteem and Applause from Men; though they be not seasoned with true Religion: But such as are by their Office, or pretend to be *the Salt of the Earth*, when they stain their Character, and give the Lie to their Professions by an unsavoury Practice, are profitable to no Purpose, and render themselves intirely contemptible, they are the Abomination of good Men, and are undervalued and hated even by the bad. It is observable, that Sinners who can feel

a Relish and take Pleasure in the Vices of their Fellows who never pretended to Holiness, are yet ordinarily found to behold, with an Abhorrence and Scorn, Impurity in those that are clothed with a sacred Character. And, indeed, in general, a holy Office and a dissolute Life, or loud Professions of Religion and yet a covetous false or unclean Temper, make such an ugly and monstrous Figure, that profane Transgressors themselves are frightened thereby and abominate it. And may all of us who name the holy Name of Christ, and ought, by a pious and pure Conversation, to be in our severa^l Stations *the Salt of the Earth*, think upon that great and awful Day, when the Redeemer of Men shall cast out and tread under Foot any of us who now lose our Savour; when, though they may now impose upon Men, every lurking Vice of the Hypocrite shall be dragged out: And when Rottenness and Deformity, our insipid and putrifying Sores will be laid fully open, what Shame will then cover our Souls? And how will every Member of that solemn and numerous Assembly put us to a Blush, that shall last to Eternity, and look us ever out of Countenance? The unfavoury shall be troden under Foot by Devils and Men, become the Scorn of these impure Spirits, and the Reproach of our own Consciences which shall then twit and upbraid us. May the Consideration of these Things still engage us to have Salt in our selves.

XIV. *You are the Light of the World. A City that that is set on a Hill, cannot be hid.*

You are the Light of the World. The Import of this Metaphore is plain enough, they were appointed

ted to make manifest the Doctrine of Christ, and publish abroad that joyful Sound by which Life and Immortality were brought to Light; they were to instruct foolish Sinners, who were overwhelmed with Ignorance and Error; and to shew the Way to the Kingdom of Righteousness and Joy unto a blind World, who were wandering into By-paths of Destruction, and fatally mistook perishing empty Nothings for real Pleasures: They were to pull off the false Vizard from Sin, whereby it charmed and enchanted Transgressors into their Souls Ruin, and to shew them its native Poison and Deformity; and were to set in a true Light the Beauties and Excellency of Religion, and shew it to be infinitely amiable and *profitable unto all Things*: They were to clear the Understandings of Men from the Clouds of Darkness which hung over their Minds, and caused them to err; to teach them their Duty and Interest, that an ungoverned Licentiousness was no valuable Freedom, and that the Service of God was the truest Liberty. And as the blind World looked only unto the Things which are present and sensible, without going further; so the Apostles were to bring *Immortality to Light*, to light Mankind into the invisible World, and let them see the incomparable Excellency of the heavenly Crown, and also the *Horrors of the bottomless Pit*, and the Terrors of *unquenchable Fire and smoking Brimstone*: In a Word, they were to cause the glorious Gospel to pierce into the Hearts of Men, and to teach them *Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. This is the Account Paul gives of his Commission, *Acts xxvi. 18.* that he was sent to the Gentiles, *to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light.* This may

may be also in some Measure applied to all Christians, as it is, *Phil. ii. 15. That ye may be blameless and harmeless, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World: And I. Thess. v. 5. We are all the Children of the Light, and Children of the Day.* Surely the Consideration hereof should engage us to shun the Works of Darknes, that we may not blemish and cloud our Brightness, but *keep our Garments white and unspotted, and make them shine with the Beauties of Holiness.*

A City that is set on a Hill, cannot be hid. The Security and Dignity of the Church are frequently set forth by a City: Hence we often read of the *Walls and Gates and Towers* of this *Jerusalem*. And the Apostles are here likened unto a *City set on a Hill*, either to point out their Duty, *namely*, that their *favoury Conversation, their pure Doctrine, and holy Practice* should be as conspicuous and evident to the World, as a City which is built upon an Eminence, and so exposed to the View of all about it. Or it may contain an Argument to inspire them with Vigour and Diligence in the Performance of their Office, because they could not now be concealed, as when in a private Station: But since they were to propagate a strange Religion through the World, of which they spake so many glorious Things, they were to expect that the Eyes of every Person would be fixed on them, so that none of their Virtues or Failings could possibly escape; so many, who prompted by Curiosity, or stirred up by Envy and Revenge, and animated by Hatred to their Persons and Religion, would so narrowly watch all their Motions; and

and therefore the Disgrace and Ignominy of their Misbehaviours would be universally spread abroad, as, on the other hand, their Character would become more illustrious, and they be crowned with greater Glory and Fame, by a pure and blameless Conversation.

We would all consider, that, however little we may think on it, every one of us is *set on a Hill*. Heaven and Hell behold us, the Angels look down with Delight upon our virtuous Actions, and these done in secret have enow of Witnesses to raise our Glory when God sees them: The apostate Angels take a malicious Pleasure in seeing us foolishly ruining our Souls, and the Disgrace and Infamy of our Sins are, or one Day will be published to all the Legions of Hell and the Armies of Heaven.

XV. Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Bushel: but on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light unto all that are in the House.

In this Verse our Saviour perswades his Disciples to be as extensively useful as they could, to scatter the Influences of their Light through the whole World, and to set no Bounds to their Endeavours in promoting the eternal Interests of others, and enlightning them with the Knowledge of Christ; for this was the very Design of their Office, and also of their Endowments and Opportunities: And then, God was, as it were, to light them, by bestowing on them extraordinary Measures of Knowledge and Grace, and by enduing them with divers Gifts and Miracles, and other Qualities that might fit them for their Work; and it would be every way as incongruous
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for them to hide these Talents, and not make a suitable Improvement of them, as it would be ridiculous for a Candle to be lighted, and then set under a Bushel, and so, notwithstanding of its burning and consuming, the House remain as dark as ever.

XVI. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

In this *Verse*, which hath a very great Connexion with the former, we have an important Duty recommended to all of us. By *Men* here, the *Jews* and *Heathen*, amongst whom the Apostles had occasion to converse, seem to be immediately understood: Though what is here enjoined ought not be so restrained, as if it were only to be practised with regard to them. It is evident that by *Light* here, the Doctrine and Preaching of the Apostles are not so much intended as their Life and Practice, their *good Works*, and such as the Light of Nature declares good and honourable: Since even *Heathens* were to be moved by them to think well of Christianity. Practice is generally found to be of a much more perswasive Motive than Argumenting is; and, as there can nothing more lessen the Force of our Exhortations than our not being influenced by them our selves, so Men are most likely to prevail upon others by such Reasonings as govern their own Affections and animate their Life: When the Person is kindled with a Fire of divine Love to God and Religion, which burns within his Breast and shines in his Life, a few Sparks of that pure Flame will work greater Effects on others than the Light of many Discourses without them.

them. And accordingly, this one principal Method whereby the Apostles and other Christians are here enjoined to propagate their Religion, *namely*, by shewing that, while they recommended the Blessings of Immortality, and inspire their Hearers with a Contempt of the World and its Pleasures, they themselves were under the Power of an eternal Life, and were mortified to the Lusts of the Flesh and the Pride of vain Men: And that they *laid no Burdens upon the Shoulders of others, which they were not willing to bear upon their own*; but that, while they preached Self-denial and the Cross, they also practised Patience and Submission under the Loss of all Things for Christ's sake. And thus the Light of their Doctrine shone before Men, when it appeared so quick and piercing, as to penetrate into their own Hearts and exert it self in their Practice: Hence it was demonstrated to be a *living Spirit* and not a *dead Letter*; this only could make it look beautiful and glorious, and shine with an uncommon and unfading Lustre.

The End hereof is *that they may glorifie your Father which is in Heaven*. That thus Men may acknowledge the Power of his Religion, and be forced to confess the Purity of his Servants, and to think well of these holy Principles which work so noble Effects upon these who profess them: As it is, I. Pet. ii. 12. *Having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil Doers, they may by your good Works which they shall behold, glorifie God in the Day of Visitation*. And principally, *that they may glorifie your heavenly Father by becoming Christians themselves, and engaging in the same Way with you*. And, I am sure, a pious and virtuous Life is the most alluring Argument

gument to this Purpose, and the readiest Way to gain Ground upon the most savage and stupid Creatures. Let this be one Method we may all take to propagate our Religion, and gain an Accession to the Party we are embarked in, by being really holy our selves, by Virtue, Patience, Self-denial, and a Contempt of the World ; and, by all our Actions and Aims, to shew that we aspire after nobler Blessings, and have our Treasures and Inheritance in Heaven, and so, *by well-doing to put to silence the Ignorance of foolish Men.*

XVII. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

Our blessed Saviour, being to explain and vindicate the moral Law from the false and narrow Glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees at some considerable Length, seems to give us this and the three following Verses by way of Preface thereto, wherein he asserts the Immutability and Blessedness of the divine Law ; and declares the Falshood and Calumny of those who suggested that he had the least Design to derogate from it. He assures them, that, whatever they might fancy, he did not come to destroy it, *that is*, either to break it in his own Practice ; or encourage others to do so by his Doctrine, to act contrary to its Design, or in the least weaken its Force and Obligation. The Law is used in a great Variety of Meanings in Scripture. Sometimes it expresses the whole of the Jewish Oeconomy complexly, and the Way whereby old Testament-saints were to be saved : And, at other Times, it points out to us the ritual and ceremonial Part in particular : Sometimes it de-

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signs legal in Opposition to Gospel Holiness: And then, at others, it signifies the moral Law; or that eternal Rule of Righteousness which springs from the Purity of the divine Nature, and spreads its Obligation over all his Subjects. And this is what seems to be directly intended by it here, in its being that Law; of which not one *Iota* could ever fail; that Law, the Breaker of any of the Commandments whereof was to be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; that Law, in the explaining and enforcing whereof almost the whole of this Sermon is spent: But by *the Law and the Prophets* in Conjunction; according to the usual Acceptation of the Phrase, the whole of the Old Testament Revelation is to be understood. Now all this Christ came *to fulfil*, to perfect and fill it up, and accomplish the Ends of it.

As to the ceremonial Law, it might easily be made out, and the Apostle to the *Hebrews* hath fully done it, that *Moses* and the Prophets have given evident Hints that it was only a Figure for the Time then present, which was to cease at the Time of Reformation: That it was designed to point out the greater and better Things of a nobler Dispensation; and that all the Observances of it were no more than some dark Shades, which were to be done away when the Messiah should give the perfecting Stroke to the Redemption of Mankind: And, indeed, I think it is so plain to every considering Person, that the Institutions of the *Jewish* Law were in themselves so childish and trifling, and so utterly unfit to purge away Sins: That, for Example, a Satisfaction should be made to an infinitely holy Being *by the Blood of Bulls and Goats*; was so unworthy of his Wisdom and Purity, so

little manifested his Justice, or illustrated the Glory of his Government; the laying the Sins of the People on the Head of a Beast, and then sending it to the Wilderness, was so palpably gross and ludicrous; if our high Priest had not been typified thereby: That, I think, the Jews must have first altogether lost a Notion of their God, and forgot that he was, before they could fancy that there never was to be a Change of the *Aaronical* Law and Priesthood. If this Law had not been at length abolished, it would in Truth have been destroyed, it would always have been weak, useless and insignificant, it must ever have remained the Law of a carnal Commandment; had not Christ fulfilled it, and made it partake of the Power of an endless Life: And it was the Messiah who inspired it with Spirit and Vigour, and gave it any Beauty or Efficacy.

And then, as to the moral Law, as Christ fulfilled the Perfection of its Purity in his own Person, so nothing in his Doctrine gives the smallest Encouragement to any Degree of Impiety: But, at the same Time he proclaims the Mercy and Blessings of the everlasting Covenant, he cries aloud to all Men to depart from Iniquity; and, while he exalts the Glory and Freedom of his Grace, he also celebrates *the Beauties of Holiness*; and his Sufferings and Satisfaction were the brightest Demonstration, that ever was given, of the sacred Authority and Inviolableness of this Law.

XVIII. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.

In this Verse our Saviour asserts, in the strongest Terms, the Certainty and Firmness of this Law in all its Purposes, and he introduces it with the greatest Solemnity, *For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass away.* The Perpetuity of any Thing is expressed by comparing it to the Stability of the heavenly Bodies, thus *Psal. lxxxix. 36. His Seed shall endure for ever, and his Throne as the Sun before me, it shall be established for ever as the Moon;* so that the plain Meaning of the Words is, that the Law should never pass away: Which is more fully expressed by our Saviour, *Mark xiii. 31. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away.* Not one *Lota*, which is a very small Letter: Nor one *Tittle*, *ἡεραία*; this Word is used by the Greeks to express a Piece of a Letter, or any the least Part of any Thing, that which is very minute. And so it denotes to us, that the smallest and most inconsiderable Part of the Law had an unshaken Firmness, and *would not pass till all be fulfilled.*

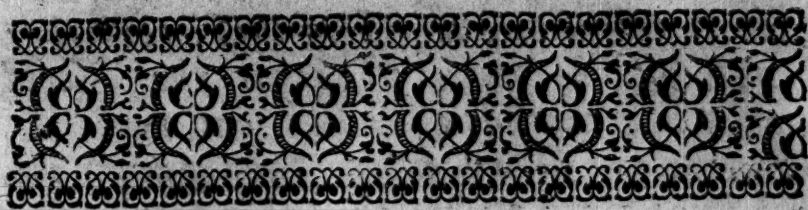
May we seriously consider, that this Law will certainly accomplish its Purposes, and, if it do not govern our Lives and sway us to holy Obedience, it will infallibly maintain its Authority by the Execution of its Threatnings. What infinite Madness is it for us to flatter our selves that they will not take Effect, and amuse our Souls into Hell with Hopes of escaping them? No, *God is not Man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent: Hath he said, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass?* Yes, if there be a God in the Heavens, and if his infinite Understanding contain enough of Knowledge, he will drag the impenitent Breaker of this

Law out of his lurking Place : And if his mighty Arm be full enough of Power, he will crush him into the lowest Hells. May we avoid these Evils, and be allured by the Promises of this Law, as it is now published to us in the Gospel, which are as certain as its Threatnings: There shall not one Tittle of the heavenly Joys, nor one Drop of the Rivers of immortal Pleasures, pass away from him who *fears God and keeps his Commandments.*

XIX. *Whosoever therefore.* * * * *



LECT-



LECTURE V.

JOHN xvii.

14. *I have given them thy Word; and the World hath hated them, because they are not of the World, even as I am not of the World.*
15. *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the World, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.*
16. *They are not of the World, even as I am not of the World.*
17. *Sanctifie them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth.*
18. *As thou hast sent me into the World, even so have I also sent them into the World.*
19. *And for their sakes I sanctifie my self, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth.*
20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their Word.*

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21. *That*

21. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the World may believe that thou hast sent me.*
22. *And the Glory which thou gavest me, I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one.*
23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the World may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*
24. *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my Glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the Foundation of the World.*
25. *O righteous Father, the World hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.*
26. *And I have declared unto them thy Name, and will declare it: that the Love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.*



Had occasion in another Place to explain the former Part of this Chapter *, and shall at this Time, through divine Assistance, discourse upon what I have now read, and
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* The Lecture upon the first Part of this Chapter is lost.

endeavour, from a View of it, to animate us to the Love of our Saviour, and endear to our Souls universal Holiness of Life, which is the distinguishing Glory of a Christian, and is absolutely necessary to his *seeing God*. It is a Part of the dying Discourses of our blessed Redeemer, which are so big with Compassion to rebellious Sinners; and contain so much heavenly Fuel, that ought to kindle a grateful Flame of divine Love to him in our Hearts: They were delivered to his Disciples a short Time before he gave the brightest Proof of the tenderest Bowels for us, by *offering himself a Sacrifice for our Sins, and becoming obedient to that Death which brought Life and Immortality to Light amongst Men*.

This Chapter consists of ardent Prayers to God his Father. *First*, for himself, that he would not forsake him in the hardest Part of the mediatorial Work, which was now approaching; but might *in that Hour glorifie him*, by affording him all these Supports and Assistances which were necessary for the triumphing over his Enemies, and behaving every way suitable to the Honour of his Character as Redeemer of Men, in *couragiously enduring the Cross and despising the Shame*: And then, upon the assured Prospect of his being enabled thus to finish the Work which his Father had given him to do, he begs that he might *glorifie him with that exalted Glory which he enjoyed with him before the World was*. And this from the Beginning to the 6 Verse, or rather to the 9. for these three Verses may be either considered as Arguments to enforce the Petitions put up for himself, or to back those which he afterwards offers for his Disciples.

From the 9 Verse to the End of the Chapter, which finishes this divine Discourse, we have several Blessings and Graces which our Lord prays for in behalf of his Disciples, who were now to be deprived of the Presence of him their chiefest Joy. He was to suffer, and then to be caught up to the Fulness of it in Heaven; and leave them behind in a Valley of Tears, where Sorrows and Wo have their doleful Habitation upon a boisterous unsettled Ocean, where Storms rage, and the roring Billows of Persecution would be ready to swallow them up, and keep them in continual Hazard of *making Shipwrack of their Faith*. And when they were thus to encounter so many formidable Enemies of their Souls, and at the same Time to want their Captain, who used to lead them on to the Battle and carry them off victorious, who enlivened them in their spiritual Warfare by his powerful Presence, and inspired them with Courage and Hope: In these Circumstances, the Lover of Souls knew they stood in need to be assisted by extraordinary Measures of Conduct and Resolution; and therefore he with the utmost Affection recommends them to the Care and Protection of his God and Father, who *heard him always*. And since he had his own inconceivable Sufferings in so near a Prospect, and yet proved so mindful of the Glory and Happiness of his Followers, how ought the Meditation hereof to make his Love burn within us, and fix us to his Service? And hence, we should be animated in our Christian Fight against a deceitful Devil and an ensnaring World, and unwearied maintain an invincible Resolution; because we have an Interest in such powerful Intercession, and have an Advocate to plead our Cause who *always*

ways prevails. O that we were but willing and obedient. To enforce these Petitions, our Saviour uses several Arguments, one or two of which are contained in the 14 Verse.

XIV. *I have given them thy Word, and the World hath hated them, because they are not of the World, even as I am not of the World.*

I have given them thy Word, says our Lord. He had published to them the Gospel, which contained the whole Counsel of God, and they had cheerfully embraced it: For so much we must understand by this Phrase, as it is more fully expressed in the 8 Verse, *For I have given to them the Words which thou gavest me, and they have received them*: He had convinced them of his divine Mission and of the other Truths of Christianity, persuaded them to the Practice of all the Duties of universal Holiness, and also given them the noble Hopes of its glorious Promises. And since he was the Word of God himself, it was highly reasonable that he should support those who had hearkened to his Voice, and trusted to his Promises: And should, both by powerful Assistances of his Spirit, and some Drops of Joy let fall from the Rivers of Pleasures, encourage and direct them in his own Work, especially when in the *second* Place they were thereby exposed to peculiar Disadvantages, *and the World hath hated them, because they are not of the World, even as I am not of the World.*

It was one great Article of Christianity, for its Followers, even while living upon Earth in the midst of a vain Conversation, surrounded with its Votaries and enticed by its Charms, yet to be separated from it, and remain under as few Ties to
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any of its Concerns as a Pilgrim and Stranger, who for a short Time travels in a foreign Country, and then hastens home to his own. And, indeed, this is in all Ages an illustrious Part of a Christian's Character, not only where the World about them, as in the Apostle's Case, were zealous in a different Religion; but even when they in Words profess the true one. The Subjects of the Messiah are not of this World, being moved by Views and Designs quite different from theirs: They have no Relish of its Pleasures, nor Esteem of its Offers, they trample upon its perishing Vanities, and are not captivated by the false Lustre of its deceitful Allurements, Riches, Profits and Honours: And though these are the Marks which the World keep always in their Eye, and which are grasped after so eagerly, and climbed up to by so much ambitious Toil, yet they are none of the Objects of their Wishes, and have little Influence on their Life; they soar aloof above them, towards nobler Hopes of Blessings that shall never have an End: The Joys of another Life, the Favour of God, and the Honours of Immortality, Things which the World are ignorant of and banish from their Thoughts, are the Subject of their most endeared Meditations, and exhaust all their Desire. And, as a Consequence of these, they must pursue different Measures, and follow a Conduct of Life intirely disagreeable to those which the World take to attain their Ends. The Arts of Cunning and Trick, Flattery and Caressing of the rich and great, are no Part of their Politicks: They abhor an ungenerous Dissimulation, though it may advance their concealed Ends; and scorn to depart from their Duty, and hazard the Favour of God to please

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Men, and raise their temporal Interests. So that, you see, the Followers of Christ *were not of this World*, and had as little Concern in its Affairs as a Stranger has in the Intrigues of a Court, which he looks at only for a Day and sees it no more; and, upon this account, *they were hated by the World*.

I shall now only consider this *Verse* as it regards Christians in general, who had all a Share in these Prayers, which, as we see from the 20 *Verse*, were put up *for them also which shall believe in him* through the World: And as to what regards the Apostles in particular, it may be brought in better when explaining the 18 *Verse*. And, indeed, beside the Case of open Persecution, true Religion always exposes these who dedicate their Lives to its Service, unto the Contempt and Hatred of a foolish World, which despises them as weak and credulous, in trusting their Happiness to an unseen State; abhors them as slow and rigid, in resisting the prevailing Force of universal Corruption, and shewing no Regard to fashionable Wickedness; and is ready to censure them as Hypocrites, and only vain Pretenders to be guided by what hath little real Influence upon their Lives. The World cannot endure those who are a continual Check to their Lusts and Passions, whose Purity and Holiness reprove their sordid Pleasures, and put to the Blush their debased Delights; and who, by their despising the Allurements of a present World, declare their mean Thoughts of those who are so foolish as to be devoted thereto: And this naturally induces the World to *hate* those who pursue so quite opposite Interests; and thus Contempt, malicious Reproach, Scorn and Calumny, with the other Engines of secret Cruelty, will always be
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the Portion of the Followers of Jesus, and they must expect this in a World that hates them. Now, since they suffered these Hardships because of their embracing the Word which he had given them, you see how strong an Argument arises hence, in favours of our Lord's Prayers in behalf of his Disciples: Since there could be nothing more reasonable, than that God should graciously bear out those, who were for his sake to be attacked by so many Enemies; especially when they had been perswaded by the Doctrine, and animated by the Example of his own Son, that they, like him, *should not be of the World*; and so the Honour of God's Faithfulness was engaged on their behalf.

XV. *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the World, but that thou shouldst keep them from the Evil.*

Here our Lord illustrates the Nature of his Petition for them. Since he had asserted in the foregoing Verse, that *they were not of this World*, it might be thought, that he designed they should be taken out of this Valley of Tears and Scene of Vanity, and an End for ever put to their Sorrows and Dangers, by exalting them immediately to the happy Regions of heavenly Peace and immortal Joy: But this was not his Prayer, he had Work for them to do, which made their continuing some time below fit and necessary; they must struggle a while with universal Corruption, that they might be Instruments of purifying such as were ordained for eternal Life; and endure Persecution, that the joyful Sound might be propagated to the Ends of the Earth; And, though *the World*
hated

hated them, they were not instantly to leave it; but stay and endeavour to promote the Happiness of their Enemies, by alluring them to Religion, and perswading them to be *wise to Salvation*. And, in order to carry on these noble Designs, our Lord does not beg that they might be presently caught up to Heaven, and set above the Wo and Misery of this World: But that *they might be kept from the Evil*, from Sin which is the greatest of Evils, the most dangerous and the most deformed; that they might be preserved pure in the midst of so much Pollution; and be enabled without Spot to maintain the glorious Character of his Servants, and not to blemish their Office by ~~any~~ cowardly Compliances with Wickedness in Power, or by departing from their Zeal and Integrity, but, with invincible Resolution and a vigorous Faith, to imitate their Master in *enduring the Cross and despising the Shame*.

XVI: *They are not of the World, even as I am not of the World.*

These Words I have already explained, and shall only observe from them, that you see what is necessary before we can be Christians. Alas! how fatal Mistakes do Men entertain about this infinitely important Concern? And how easily are they flattered into a Belief that they are faithful Subjects of the Messiah? But remember we can have no Title to that illustrious Character if we be *of this World*, let our Professions of Religion be never so loud and clamorous; if we pursue the same Designs, and have like Desires to the earthly-minded; if we are in Love with its Vanities, and charmed with its Pomp and Shew; if we
grasp

grasp at its Riches, aspire to its Honours as eagerly as others; if we court its Esteem and Applause, and be ambitious, vain or covetous of its Offers: Let us not deceive our own Souls, we can never be the Servants of him who *was not of this World*. So undoubted is this, that the Apostle hence exhorts us, as it is I. John ii. 15. *Love not the World, neither the Things that are in the World. If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* But may God give us this Evidence of our Christianity, while we live here below, to be disengaged from its Delights, and deaf to its Charms; with a noble Disdain to trample upon its best Offers; and, being inspired by the Power of an immortal Life, to manifest, in all our Desires and Endeavours, that *we have our Hopes and our Conversation in Heaven, whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body.*

XVII. *Sanctify them through thy Truth: thy Word is Truth.*

Here we have another Prayer Christ makes for his Disciples. *Sanctifie them through thy Truth,* advance them to greater Degrees of Grace and Purity, subdue more and more any remaining Lusts and Passions, and cause them to make a vigorous Progress in every Virtue that may prove an Ornament to their Christianity. But I think this Prayer respects immediately the apostolical Character of his Disciples; and then its Meaning is, that God, by a plentiful Effusion of the Graces of his Spirit, might separate them from the World, and consecrate them wholly to his Service: This way the Word is frequently taken, so God speaks

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to Jeremiah, *Jer. i. 5.* Before I formed thee in the Belly, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the Womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a Prophet unto the Nations. And God commands Moses, *Exod. xxix. 1.* to hallow or sanctify Aaron and his Sons to the Priests Office. This Petition also principally intends their being endued with all these Qualifications that were necessary for so excellent and difficult a Work as they were designed to promote; an invincible Courage, that they might resist to Blood, striving against Sin; a Temper exalted above the Honours or Pleasures of Life, that they might not be entangled by the World, or sully their Character by turning aside to the Pursuit of it; that they might be endued with that pure and peaceable Wisdom, which is so amiable an Excellency, and is so winning upon all Men; and might be purified from irregular Passions, than which nothing could more obstruct their Work, and render their Exhortations ineffectual; and, in a Word, that God would crown them with an unshaken Perseverance in their Duty, that so they might prove truly useful, and finish their Course with Joy.

And Christ prays, that they might be thus sanctified through his Truth. This Word may here be taken for God's Fidelity and Veracity: And in that View of it, our Lord lays claim to the Promises which the Father had made him, and particularly of his Protection and Grace toward his Followers, now when they were about to be deprived of their Saviour's more immediate Direction and Assistances. But there seems to me further to be a peculiar Beauty and Force in this Expression: In the fourteenth Verse, Christ tells, that

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he had given them *God's Word*, which is plainly the same with *Truth* here; that they had received it, which would prove the Source of their Troubles, and the Harred of the World: Now he in this prays that this same *Word* might be the Means of sanctifying, encouraging and supporting them in their Apostleship; that the Love and Power of a Redeemer, shining with so much Brightness in it, might allure their Souls to their Master, and keep them constant in his Service; and that they might be animated in the midst of Hazards and Terrors, from the Joy it set before them, and be incited by the Power of its glorious Promises to press through Death and every Danger.

And then he very emphatically adds, *thy Word is Truth*, purified from the least Remain of Deceit, without any Dregs of Diffimulation or Flattery: All its Pleasures are infinitely real, and its Gain assured. And it was this Truth which gave his Word Spirit and Life, and made it effectual. In the Case of the Apostles, it was the infallible Truth of the Word which Christ had given them, with all its Promises and the Certainty of a blessed Immortality, which quickned their Hopes, and made them trample on the World, and remain steady and unmoved either by its Favours or Frowns.

XVIII. *As thou hast sent me into the World, even so have I also sent them into the World.*

Here we have an Argument to enforce this Prayer for his Apostles, taken from the Nature and Ends of their Mission: The Design of Christ's tabernacling amongst Men, was to glorify the Grace of God in the Salvation of Sinners, to overturn the

the Kingdom of Satan, and destroy all his Works, to reduce Men to the Obedience of their lawful Sovereign, and, both by his preaching and untainted Holiness, to engage them to Religion and to go on in the Paths of the divine Life. Now, he also sent his Apostles into the World to promote the same Ends, and their Office was supported by the same Authority with his own. And though there was an infinite Difference betwixt the Work of him who was to redeem Men by his Blood, and conquer them by his Power, and theirs who could only be Helpers of their Joy; he was sent into the World to *bring in an ever-lasting Righteousness*; and they could do no more but publish it: Yet, they were the same as to the Force of Christ's Argument; for it was reasonable the Father should pour down upon the Apostles the Graces of that Spirit, whereby *he was anointed without Measure*, since they were to be employed by the same Authority, for the same Purposes, and must encounter with the like Difficulties. Christ sent them out to the World to attack prevailing Wickedness, and spread a new Religion through the Earth that was bigotted in Idolatry; they were to grapple with the Sophistry of the Philosophers, the Cunning of the Politician, yea, to combat the Power and Triumphs of the Roman Empire: For Wickedness and Idolatry had possessed the Throne, and diffused themselves amongst the People; so that the whole World were their Enemies and hated them, Afflictions Scorn, Persecutions, the Lusts and Passions of Men, and the bewitching Charms of Sin, all strengthened the Armies of the Aliens. Now to put these to flight, and prove victorious, certainly made it necessary

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for the Father to hear our Lord's Petition in behalf of his Disciples, by *sanctifying them through the Truth*: Which Christ urges, in the following Verse, by another powerful Argument, taken from the End of his own Mission, and Separation to the mediatorial Work.

XIX. *And for their sakes I sanctify my self, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth.*

And for their sakes I sanctify my self. This was the Reason of my being separated and dedicated to the Work of Redeemer, that I might purchase for Sinners every Grace to enable them to persevere in Religion, perform the hardest Duty, and surmount the greatest Danger, and ever go in the Brightness of God's Strength, to love and to serve him; and be altogether purified and sanctified through the Truth. *He ascended on high, led Captivity captive, and received Gifts for Men, even for the rebellious; that God the Lord might dwell amongst them.* But Christ's here *sanctifying himself*, seems particularly to relate to his offering his Soul a Sacrifice for Sin, whereby he obtained eternal Redemption for us: And agreeably hereto the Apostle mentions this End of our Lord's Death, *Heb. x. 9, 10.* when in Sacrifices and Burnt-offerings God could take no Pleasure, then he said, *Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God: By the which Will we are sanctified, through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all.* And seeing what Christ here prayed was the very Design of his coming to the World, I need not insist in shewing, how strong an Argument this was to back his Petition, it is so plain: And, I am sure, that if this was a Reason why God should sanctifie the Disciples through the Truth,

Truth, it ought to be a prevailing Motive to engage us to abandon the Pollution of a sinful World, and be purified from all the Dregs of Iniquity; by indulging which, we *trample upon the Blood of a Saviour*, and oppose the direct Ends of his *tabernacling amongst Men*.

XX. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their Word.*

In this Verse he lays down an assured Ground of Comfort, to all who should be willing in after Ages through the World to believe the Gospel and obey it. Though there might, in some of these Petitions, be a special Regard had to the Apostles in the Discharge of their Office; yet, our Lord's Views were not so narrow and confined, he had the Salvation and Happiness of all that should become his faithful Followers in his Eye: How extensive was his Concern and dying Affection? None who love him, or shall ever be engaged by the Gospel to give him their Hearts, but had a Share in these effectual Prayers, as they have now in his powerful Intercession. With what Pleasure may we, when attacked by Enemies to our Happiness and Glory which we are unable to combat, when surrounded by bewitching Temptations or frightened by the Terrors of Persecution, *flee to this strong Hold*, and with Joy meditate upon this noble Argument of Hope? With what Courage and Boldness may we address the Throne of Grace, that God would subdue the Remains of our Corruptions, beautify us more and more with the Ornaments of Innocence, crown us with new Triumphs over any rebellious Thought and irre-

gular Desire, and support us with his everlasting Arms, till we be seated in the Kingdom of our Father without any more Hazard of falling from our Honour, or wandring from our Way; when we can plead, not only that he would hearken to our Desires which are so languishing and imperfect, but that he would answer these the Prayers of his beloved Son who always pleased him? And this very Prayer of Christ, which he put up for us, if we believe in his Name, should be improved by us as the chief Argument of our Hope and Acceptance.

XXI. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the World may believe that thou hast sent me.

This and the two following Verses contain a Subject of the greatest Importance to us, a full Explication whereof would draw out this Discourse to too great a Length: I shall therefore, that I may not encroach on your Time, mention only a few of these Things which might be said upon it.

Some Interpreters think that the Oneness, which Christ here so earnestly prays might prevail amongst his Followers, is not to be understood so much of Love and Affection to one another, and an harmonious Concord amongst themselves; but of their Union, by a common Participation of the same Spirit of the Father and Son, which he begs might be poured out upon them: And that this respects, in particular, the Apostles being endued with the Gift of working Miracles, as Christ did through the same holy Spirit, which was remarkably

ably accomplished at the down-pouring of the holy Ghost after our Saviour's Resurrection; which made them all one, by the same Spirit of Christ's working in and inspiring them. And this they think is fully proved from *John* xiv. 20. where, speaking of sending the *Comforter* to them, Christ says, *at that Day ye shall know, namely, say they, by your Power to work Miracles, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*

But, though there be no Necessity of excluding this altogether, yet, there are many Reasons for believing that the mutual Charity of Christians towards one another, and their Harmony and Concord, are here comprehended, if not principally designed: Such as, the Excellency of that Grace, the diffusive Influence it hath upon all the Parts of Christian Practice, compared with the Agreeableness thereto of the Characters here given of this Union, the natural Import of the Phrases and their Use in other Places; all which might be easily proved, if it were meet to take up your Time with Disputes of this Nature: Besides that it seems plain from the foregoing Verse, that this Prayer was in some Measure put up for all that through the World should believe in Christ, which could not be, if the Gift of Miracles were principally intended.

Our Lord here prays for them, that *they all may be one.* That since they had *one Faith and Baptism*, were animated by the Power of the same eternal Life, and were joyned by the infinitely endearing Tie of being Members of that *Body whereof Christ is the Head*, and followed the same Rule, they might be also united in so entire an Affection by

the Bond of Love, that they might become as it were one Spirit.

The Measure and Pattern whereby the Degrees of this Union ought to be regulated, is that Oneness which is betwixt the Father and the Son, *as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.* It does not seem that this is directly meant of the essential Union that is betwixt the Persons of the adorable Trinity; but that the Son is here to be considered as clothed with the Character of Mediator, and that infinite Friendship, Delight and Satisfaction, and that ineffable Union that is betwixt them in that Respect: Since it is under this Notion that Christ here prays for his Disciples, and is the Cement of their Union with God and with one another. That I may not trouble you with running a metaphysical Parallel, betwixt that Oneness whereby the Son is in the Father and he in him, and the Union of Believers: I shall only take notice, that it here points out to us the Ardency of that flaming Love wherewith all Christians should burn to one another, and that they ought to set no Bounds to the Endearments of their mutual Affection; provided, as our Lord adds, that *they may be one in us*, that their Love terminate in God, and their Charity be in obedience to his Commands, and an Effect of their Regard to him. We should always mind, that the Fire and Flame of our Love must ascend to our Redeemer alone, while only some Sparks of it should be scattered amongst the best Creatures. *That they also may be one in us*: Every particular Christian, like the *burning Bush*, should be set on Fire by divine Love; their Affection to one another, and harmonious Concord, should constantly unite all these heavenly

venly Flames into one Body, which altogether must fly straight to God, and there they remain *one in him.*

Here follows an Argument to enforce this Petition, taken from a noble Effect which would flow from it, *that the World may believe that thou hast sent me.* If we follow the first Explication I mentioned, *namely*, that by this Union, which Christ here prays for, is to be meant the common Efficacy of the same Spirit enabling them to perform miraculous Operations, the Argument is plain, *namely*, that the World might by these extraordinary Works be perswaded of the Truth of Christianity confirmed by them. But if that mutual Love and Harmony which should reign amongst Christians, be designed in this Prayer, as I think it evident it is, the Reason is also very forcible: For a sincere disinterested Love, prevailing in any Society, is so amiable and endearing a Quality, that it cannot but appear beautiful in the Eyes even of those who are not possessed of this exalted Virtue. Charity, Forbearance, a forgiving patient Temper, and a generous Concern and diffusive Kindness for others, are Charms which strike the most stupid, and command Respect and Veneration: And this Love hath so much of God in it, that it would tend to make the World believe that the Religion must be divine, that had such excellent Effects on its Followers; this our Saviour directly asserts, *John xiii. 34. A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.*

XXII. *And the Glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.*

In this *Verse* we have another Reason of Christ's Fervency in this Petition, taken from what he had done in order to this End. Some understand again by this *Glory*, the Power of Miracles bestowed on the Apostles, which is called *the Glory of Christ*, John ii. 11. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory.* But I choose rather to understand hereby, these Graces of the Spirit which have the most immediate Influence upon the Love and Union of Christians; such as Humility, Self-denial, Gentleness, a Government of our Passions, *Wisdom* that is pure and peaceable, kind and easie to be intreated; not excluding the peculiar Honours bestowed on his Apostles, as the *Ministers of Reconciliation* and *Ambassadors of Christ*: Which God-like Virtues were, in a very illustrious Manner, the distinguishing Glory of our merciful Redeemer, and Part of these Gifts which he received from on high to bestow upon Men.

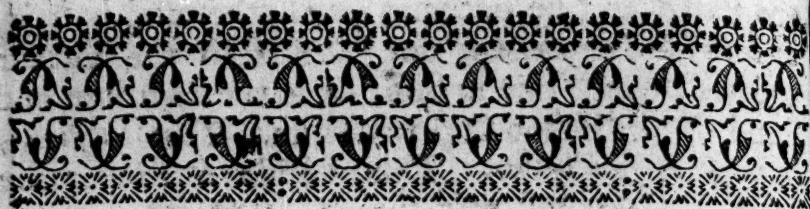
XXIII. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the World may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

I in them and thou in me. Which Phrase seems to point out to us, that, though we can never be immediately united to God the Father; since we are polluted with Sin, and he a consuming Fire to all the Workers of it: Yet, through the Mediator Jesus Christ, we are joyned to him by Love
and

and Faith, and he becomes our Father and Friend, as it is here expressed, our Lord is in the Father and we become one in him, he is the Medium and Bond of our Fellowship with him. *That they may be made perfect in one.* This, beside a Prayer for great Degrees of this Grace, contains a noble Character of Love and Harmony, as the Perfection of the Christian Life, that Virtue which gives the finishing Stroke to its Glory and Beauty. How loftily does John speak forth the Praises of this Grace? I. John iv. 16. *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* And, that this is necessarily attended with Love to our Neighbour, he assures us in the 12 Verse, *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his Love is perfected in us.* * * *



This



This Sermon, which is one of the first the Author preached, though in some Things it coincides with the *Eighth Sermon* of the first *Volume*, is printed here, mainly with a View to make this *Volume* equal to the first.

S E R M O N XVIII.

ISAIAH xxviii. 5. *In that Day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a Crown of Glory, and for a Diadem of Beauty unto the Residue of his People.*



IT is the Observation of the Psalmist *David*, that Happiness is the general Pursuit of Mankind, and their common Enquiry, *Who will shew us any Good?* But a blinded Understanding and vicious debased Inclinations make the greatest Part of them neglect and contemn true Bliss, while they with eager Desires

The Happiness of the Blessed, &c. 523

Desires pursue what has only the Appearance of it to their carnal Minds, but contains the Realities of Torment and Death. Miserable Sinners! who embrace devouring Coals in their Bosom which will consume them to the lowest Hells, while they fancy that they are true Pleasures hinders them from examining into their Management, and aspiring after nobler Entertainments: Present Feeling is the Rule of their Life, without considering that what is sweet in the Mouth may prove Bitterness and Poison in the Belly; and that a Snare to catch and detain us in everlasting Chains of Darkness, may have its Outside adorned with rich enough Trappings, and gilded with the Charms of Sense; and thus it is with the highest and most beautiful Allurements of Sin, they lead to Death and will end in Destruction and Bondage.

The indisputed Importance of being happy or miserable, the fatal Consequences that will attend a Mistake as to true Blessedness and real Good, and the great Difficulties in settling upon a right Foundation, which being upon a Rock will bear the Attacks of the most violent Winds and impetuous Floods, ought to make us very careful and concerned in our Management as to this Matter, that so we may not be deceived by an imaginary Happiness, like the hungry Man mentioned *Isa. xxviii. 8.* *Who dreameth, and behold, he eateth, but he awaketh and his Soul is empty; or as when a thirsty Man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh, but he awaketh and behold, he is faint.* And this is, in a particular Manner, our Duty, who have better Helps to the answering the Question, *Who will shew us any Good?* and more Arguments to establish and fix our Souls than the *Israelites* had: For to us *Life*
and

and Immortality are brought to Light in the Gospel; and the Glory of another World, with the Certainty of their attaining to it, who by *Patience in well doing wait for it*, which were in former Ages in a great Measure hid, are now made manifest by a brighter Revelation: Nor should we be content with a general Notion that our Treasures are beyond Time, and lodged in Heaven, though the firm abiding Perswasion of this be a high Attainment; but it ought to be our Endeavour to know as much and as particularly of that happy State as our weak Capacities can comprehend, that we may improve it to the best Advantage. I am sure this is the noblest Enquiry we can possibly employ our Thoughts about; and the spending of our Time in the Discoveries of an unknown World will yield us the truest Satisfaction, without a repenting Thought that we did not divert to other Questions.

It is therefore my Purpose at this Time, by the Assistance of God, to discourse a little upon that excellent Glory which is proposed to the Followers of Christ, and of that noble Prize which the Runners in the spiritual Race aspire after: That, from the Worth and Value of this Kingdom of God, we may be animated to a vigorous active Pursuit thereof; and that, considering how glorious a State our Souls may attain to, we may despise the baser Pleasures which engross the Thoughts, Application and Desires of the foolish and degenerate World, and may live in this Earth as those who hope one Day to walk in the Path of Life, and be filled with *those Pleasures which are at God's right Hand for evermore*. But, before I enter directly upon this Subject, I shall endeavour to shew the
 Grounds

Grounds of my making Choice of the Words now read, and of applying them to this Purpose.

In the preceeding Chapter, the Prophet was foretelling the Coming of the Messiah, and the enlarging of his Dominion, the true Church, by the breaking down of that Wall of Partition which had hitherto enclosed God's peculiar People within the Limits of *Judea*, and by the Occasion of the *Gentiles*, when *they that were ready to perish in the Land of Assyria, and the Outcasts in the Land of Egypt, shall worship the Lord in the holy Mount at Jerusalem.* In this Chapter he seems to proceed in the same Design, and, in the Beginning of it, he shews the Folly and Vanity of wicked *Ephraim*, in seeking true Honour and Blessedness in the Ways of Sin and Rebellion: For all its Pleasures were fading and short-lived, and ushered in Misery and Wo; the Pride of the Drunkards, which made them believe they were adorned with Crowns and had a glorious Beauty, would prove as a fading Flower which should be troden under Feet, and this he shews in the first four Verses. In the Words we have read, he lays open the different State of the truly Pious who hearkned to the Voice of God; for it seems, without any just Debate, that they are designed by *the Residue of his People.*

In that Day shall the Lord of Hosts be to them for a Crown of Glory and a Diadem of Beauty. Some Commentators refer this great Goodness of God, and the Honour he here promises to put upon them, to the Restauration of the Two Tribes from their *Chaldean Captivity*, while the other ten, expressed by *Ephraim*, were scattered amongst the Nations without being again gathered. Others, upon better

ter Grounds, think what is here said to be designed of the Days of the Gospel, when the Messiah should be the Glory and Salvation of *Israel*. It would be beyond my Intention to examine what might be argued for applying it either of these Ways, only I shall offer a few Things to prove the Reasonableness of the Use I design to make of this Text.

It is obvious to every Person who is but a little acquainted with the sacred Oracles, that the earthly *Canaan* was a Type and Emblem of a better and a heavenly Country. Hence the glorious Things that are said of it in the Old Testament, are ultimately designed to point out that Overflow of Happiness which will be the Portion of the sincerely godly in the other World : The Gospel State is a higher and more eminent Representation of the new *Jerusalem*, hence there are several Prophecies concerning the Kingdom of the Messiah, which may very well be applied to the triumphant State of the Church above, at least, this much admits of no Dispute, that whatever Glory and Beauty is attributed to the most flourishing State of the Church in Earth, is certainly true in a more elevated Sense of immortal Felicity with God in Heaven. Yea, we find in the New Testament some Passages of the 60 of *Isaiah*, which seem to relate immediately to the Gospel State, applied to the Glory and Bliss of the higher House. Rev. xxi. 24, 25. *And the Nations of them which are saved shall walk in the Light of it, and the Gates of it shall not be shut at all by Day :* Which is a sufficient Authority to justify me in applying this Text in its most sublime Meaning and farthest Prospect the same Way ; for God then shall be, in a higher
Manner

Manner than ever he was upon Earth, *a Crown of Glory* to perfected Spirits.

In this View of the Words we may consider these Things in them. 1. A Metaphore, whereby the Felicity and Dignity, which the Saints shall be made Partakers of after Death in their Father's House, is expressed, *a Crown of Glory and a Diadem of Beauty*. A Crown is the last Wish of Ambition, and has all the Splendor and Greatness which present Things can afford. None pretend to soar higher, for thence they propose to have all the Means of gratifying their Passions and Desires; supreme Rule and Dominion dazzle the Eyes of Men, and are admired as glorious and great: Hence the incomprehensible Honour and Pleasure that the Inhabitants of Heaven shall possess, are frequently held out in Scripture under the Notion of a *Kingdom* and a *Crown*, because there was nothing upon Earth to give us higher Notions of the Excellency of this unseen State, glorified Spirits are said to *reign with Christ*, and to be *Kings and Priests unto the Father*.

2dly. We have the Perfection of this State held out to us, from the great Author and Source of its Glory, God himself, *in that Day shall the Lord of Hosts be a Crown of Glory*. The mighty God who commands the Armies of Heaven and all their Hosts, by an uncontrouled Rule, shall then in an eminent Manner be a *Diadem of Beauty* to Saints: All the Happiness in the Creation owns him for its Fountain, whence the small Rivulets of Bliss that are scattered through it flow; but celestial Glory is in a more peculiar Sense ascribed to him, it is that *City which hath Foundations whose Builder and Maker is God, which he hath prepared, wherefore*
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he is not ashamed to be called their God. Besides, this God is a Crown of Glory to them: As their Happiness principally lies in the satisfying Knowledge and Love of their Maker, which will swallow up all lesser Objects when they shall behold his Face with Joy; so their Likeness to him in Holiness and unspotted Purity, their Relation to him as their Lord and Father, and the complete Union which will result thence, shall be the Glory of their Crown and the Top of their Dignity.

3dly. We have the Persons who shall be advanced to this Honour, and be made Partakers of it, *the Residue of his People*: By whom, agreeably to the Context, we are to understand such as separate themselves from an evil World and the Pollution of Life, and are not mixed with the *Drun-kards of Ephraim* in a debauched dissolute Practice.

I do not purpose to give any ways a full Account of *the Glory that shall be revealed*, or to handle the several Parts of which it is generally thought to be made up: Since, to touch but slightly at each of these, would transgress the Bounds of such a Discourse. I shall only give a short View of what lies directly in the Text, *namely*, of this Happiness as it consists immediately in God himself, of that *Crown and Diadem* which the Lord of Hosts shall be to them: And therefore, I shall not so much consider the happy Society that Angels and Men will have when both of them dwell in the Love of God, that General Assembly and Church of the First-born; nor the vast Increase of their Knowledge and Understanding of God's Ways and Works, in the clear Views they shall then have of them; nor the Pleasures of an immortal spiritual Body raised to Honour and to Life: But I shall
mostly

mostly confine my self to Mount Zion as it is the *City of the living God*, and as Believers there are *come to God the Judge of all*, and to *Jesus the Mediator of the better Covenant*.

From these Words thus explained we may draw the following Observation, that as God is in some Measure in the Gospel-state when compared with the *Jewish*, so, in a peculiarly eminent manner, he himself will be the Happiness and Bliss, the Beauty and Ornament of the Spirits of just Men when brought to Heaven. As the Beginnings of Grace and of *the Life of God* upon Earth is his Workmanship, and carried on by his almighty Arm, so the finishing of it will be as immediately owing to him, and the Perfection thereof when completed will ly in God, who will be their Pleasure, their Glory and their highest Joy; *in that Day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a Crown of Glory, and a Diadem of Beauty to the Residue of his People.*

In discoursing from this Doctrine I shall do these Things.

1. I shall endeavour to confirm and illustrate it from several Instances; and, in the going along, I shall shew how this Consideration is a Proof of the great Blessedness of this happy State: And, in doing this, I shall make it my Business not to be *wise above what is written*, but follow the plain Revelation of these Mysteries given us in the Oracles of God. 2dly. I shall add a few more general Remarks, to demonstrate the Weight of Glory and the Perfection thereof in Heaven, from God's being its Crown and Ornament of Beauty. And lastly. I shall make some practical Inferences; and endeavour thence to stir us up to vigorous and persevering Efforts, that we our selves may not

miss of this Reward, but may at last comprehend the Length, and Breadth, and Depth of it, by feeling and enjoying it.

1. This Truth, as it is highly agreeable to Reason, for what can consummate Felicity consist in so much as in the highest Good and the most perfect Being? So it is in a great many Places of Scripture thus held out to us, where, after comparing Heaven and its Pleasures to the most delightful and amiable Enjoyments of Earth, and whatever has any Lustre and Charms in it here below, its lying in God is still given as the highest Notion we can have of it: The Voice from Heaven where it was best known proclaims this as the great Description of it, Rev. xxi. 3. *Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with Men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.* And Chap. xxii. 3. *There shall be no more Curse, nothing that is noxious and hurtful; follows the great Reason of this, but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his Servants shall serve him.* As Jesus Christ is the great Author and Substance of the Gospel, and under it *there is neither Jew nor Greek, Circumcision nor Uncircumcision, but Christ is all and in all; the whole Life and Light, the Source of all Grace and Good to Believers, their Prophet, Priest and King: So when the End cometh, and he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God even the Father, when he shall have put down all Rule and all Authority and Power; and when all Things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all Things under him, that God may be all in all, I. Cor. xv. 24, 28.* This is a noble Description of the heavenly Glory, how happy they to whom

whom *God is all*? How great will this Bliss be esteemed by such as have any Knowledge what must be contained therein? As the everlasting *Chains of Darkness* in which the Damned are bound, the *Fire and Brimstone* of the *Lake* which burneth with them, and the gnawing *Worm* which dieth not, how awful and terrible soever, seem to me to be but faint Representations of the Torments and Misery in Hell, in Comparison to the Sinner's being held forth as *falling into the Hands of the living God*, who will immediately execute his *Vengeance upon those that forget him*; in their being *Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction*, in whom God will make his Power known and shew his *Wrath*; and in their being punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*: So the *Feast with Abraham and Isaac*, the wiping away of all *Tears*, and their being no more *Sickness or Pain*, the *white Robe*, yea, the *incorruptible glorious Body*, the *Kingdom* and the *Crown* seem all to be swallowed up in their being ever with the Lord, and having none in Heaven but him, in the Lord of Hosts being a *Diadem of Beauty* to his People; and in their being possessed of *Fulness of Joy* in God's Presence, and of eternal Pleasures at his right Hand.

But, beside what has been now said in general upon this Head, it will not be unfit to take a more particular View of some Things relating to this Subject. And, 1. As to the Knowledge and Understanding of the Saints, God will in a special manner be both the Object and the Author of it; They shall then see him as he is, and himself will inspire them with these Discoveries, and create in them such piercing Eyes, with him is the Fountain

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* See Vol. I. Page 515, 516.

of Life, and in his Light they shall see Light, Psal xxxvi. 9. The Lord shall then be their Light and Salvation: Agreeably to this we have a very express Account thereof, Rev. xxi. 23. *And the City had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it, for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof; and Chap. xxiii. 5. And there shall be no Night there, and they need no Candle, neither Light of the Sun, for the Lord giveth them Light.* In this imperfect State of Things, we are obliged to use a great many toilsom laborious Helps to acquire small Degrees of Knowledge, and they oft fail us; we cannot see Things as they are, but must gather their Nature and Properties from their Effects; and we want the Assistance of others to instruct us in most Truths: There are here instituted a Ministry and Sacraments, and other Ordinances to help us to some faint Views of our most important Concerns; but when we shall be declared *Children of the Resurrection*, God will be our great Prophet, and we shall immediately be all taught of him. I shall not engage my self in curious Enquiries concerning any Advances that these Sons of God may make in Knowledge, and the Means they may use for that End: But that God will himself, without any inferior Helps, in a great Measure fill them with the noblest Wisdom and Understanding, is evident, beside what I have already said, from the sudden Change that is made upon a Soul after its becoming an Inhabitant of that City; they who knew so little and erred so much but a few Moments before, are perfected in Knowledge upon their Entrance into it: *There shall be no more thence an Infant of Days, for the Child shall die an hundred Years old.* Learning and Parts, which

which make a Person shine so much brighter than others upon Earth, will cause but small Difference there: A more holy, though a less learned Christian, shall then have as noble Endowments of Mind as those to whom they were far inferior in them on Earth; because then God himself will be their Sun: And the learned Qualifications, which are Means of Knowledge while here, will then be extinguished by that divine Light.

Now, the Excellency of our Knowledge, which ought to make that State amiable to us, appears from this Consideration, that God himself shall be our Teacher and our Prophet, our Crown of Glory and Diadem of Beauty, in the following Particulars. 1. This proves that we shall be perfect and complete, vastly beyond what we can attain to here, in its enlarged Extent, Clearness and Certainty. I shall not insist upon the Advantage, that we shall then be pure, free from turbulent Passions and deluding Prejudices: But only consider how we shall hence be above the Condition of even innocent *Adam* on Earth. The Scantiness and confined Nature of our Knowledge here, beside what arises from our sinful Passions and Prejudices, flow from the Imperfection of the Means and Helps afforded us; our Memories are feeble and weak, and want that Firmness which is necessary for great Advances in Understanding; our Senses are too dull to discover the Beauties of the Creation, our Eyes are not sharp and piercing enough to look into the nicest Parts even of our own Bodies, which have most of Wisdom and of Art: But now, when God is the Light of Heaven, there is no Place for any Remainder of these or such like Weaknesses, he will then fill the Soul

with the purest Light; God's Work shall then be perfect, because immediately his own; *now we know but in Part, but then we shall know even as we are known.* O bright and glorious Day! when God himself is the Sun, without any Mixture of Darkness or Night, no Spot or Blemish, and no Cloud to hide it from our Eyes; when our Knowledge shall be as large as the Wishes and Capacity of an exalted Soul; Then with one Look of an Eye, enlightned by Rays from God himself, we shall pierce into the Abyss of Wisdom and Goodness that is in the divine Ways and Works, and infinitely farther than the most knowing upon Earth, after all their Labour and Search: How ravishing should be the Prospect, and how incomprehensibly more will be the Enjoyment of it? May we apply our selves to be assured that we shall thus see God, by doing his Will: And, in the Views of it, condemn that vain Learning and Wit, when not improved to the Ends of Religion, which are the Source of so much Pride and Contention here; and cry out, *Where is the wise? where is the Scribe? where is the Disputer of this World?*

2dly. From God and the Lamb's being the Light of Heaven, it follows that our Knowledge shall be attended with the greatest Ease and Pleasure. Upon Earth, Men toil and sweat, and, after all, their Labour increases their Grief and Sorrow, they find a Thousand perplexing Difficulties for one clear undisturbed Truth. The little Vigour and Activity which our Souls have, is spent and consumed in Attainments which have no Value in themselves, but as they are subservient to the finding out of real Truths. How much

much Time and Thought do Languages and the Principles of Sciences engross? But in Heaven, where God is the immediate Source of Light, they will have nothing ado but to know, and the least of our Capacities will not be taken up with unnecessary Furniture. Our Powers will be mightily enlarged, and yet all of them will be filled with the purest and noblest Truths, without Vexation or Pain, which shall be for ever banished by heavenly Satisfaction, and divine Pleasure and Contentment.

3dly. From this follows the Constancy and Uninterruptedness of our Knowledge in Heaven. Objects below are sometimes set in a clearer Light, and thence removed to a dimmer View; the Sources of our Understanding are not at all Times alike clear and open; the Arguments whereby we are convinced of Truths slip out of our Minds, or do not at all Times make so lively Impressions upon us: Hence we are wavering and inconstant, filled with Doubts and Debates, but where *God is the Sun*, there is nothing can lessen it, but it ever shines with such Brightness into the Soul, that all their Knowledge, if I may so speak, consists of first Principles, no probable uncertain Opinions where the Light is so piercing and pure.

Lastly. Hence it follows that 'tis abiding and shall never have an End. By this the Happiness, the Holiness and the Knowledge of Saints, are confirmed and persevering. *Adam* and the Angels who fell were endued with Knowledge so as to make their Sin inexcusable, but they were left to themselves as to the Increase and preserving

of it, through strong Temptations and false Colours they were blinded and darkned; and indeed no finite Powers can of themselves be above Danger of being deceived and leaving their first Habitation: But now, the Knowledge and Happiness of Saints in Heaven shall be as lasting as their immortal Spirits, because they shall ever walk in God's Brightness, in whose working there is no Decay or lessened Force, with whom there is no Variation or Shadow of changing.

2dly. As I have now shewn God's direct Influence upon the Understanding of perfected Spirits, from his being the great and immediate Author of it; so he is the principal Object thereof: Hence in Scripture we read this Description of our future glorious State, that *we shall see God*; and indeed the Contemplation of the best and greatest Being must needs be the Perfection of Knowledge. We in him discover the most useful and excellent Truths, Glories that have no Mixture of Impurity which stains the Heavens themselves, or of Folly wherewith the Angels are charged: Especially when we shall then know God in the most exalted Manner, *Face to Face*, and, as the Apostle *John* expresses it, *see him as he is*, I shall not trouble you with the Debates of the Schools about seeing the Essence of God, but only propose one Thing upon this Head, to give us some faint View of this elevated Knowledge of God. I hope none will deny, that though there had been no material World, rational Creatures might have known God, and admired and adored his Perfections: Now, they in that Case would not have been instructed as to these

these Excellencies of God from his Works, which were not then made, but from a View of his Nature, and of these Perfections as they were originally in himself: And, I suppose, we have Ground to think, that in the *seeing God as he is, Face to Face*, this much may be included, that we shall not only, as now, discover divine Wisdom, Power and Goodness from the Signatures of them in these his Works; but shall immediately apprehend them as in God himself considered as an infinite Mind, their Source and Spring, as well as see them manifested by the Order and Beauty of the Universe. And thus we shall have more immediate, clear and sublime Views of him, in that, if to *see God* be our *Glory and Diadem*, to *see him as he is* must make us incomprehensibly happy and blessed.

In the next Place, the Truth of the Doctrine appears hence, that God will be the immediate Object of our Love, Praise and Worship, and that in a Way becoming the Father of Spirits, and his Servants whom he delights to honour. It is a noble Part of the Description of the new *Jerusalem* given, *Rev. xxi. 22. And I saw no Temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it.* The Temple being an eminent Symbol of God's Presence amongst the *Jews*, and the Place where they were to perform the most noted Pieces of external Worship; all the positive Institutions and Helps to spiritual Service are expressed thereby: So, by the Absence of it in Heaven, we are informed that all Ordinances of that Nature, Sacraments and outward Services, shall be swallowed up of Spirit and of Life. Under the Law they had a Load of such Elements,
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because they were necessary for that weak State; Persons then were not fit for direct Discoveries of the Messiah, and so his Person and Work were held out to them by divers Types and Figures, hence it is reckoned the Glory of the Gospel State, that Men under it *worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth*: But this, however preferable to the childish Age of the Jewish Church, is but an Emblem and faint Picture of the Spirituality of that manly and rational Service, that is paid to God in Heaven; nothing shall be there, but what is essentially holy in its own Nature, and flows from seeing God in his perfect Purity. Adam, though without Sin and truly holy, yet had not such an enlarged Capacity, that Firmness and Strength, as to sustain any long Continuance of this heavenly Worship: He had his Sacraments, and his Sabbath, wherein he was more especially called to adore his Maker and sing forth his Praises than in the other six Days of the Week; but in Heaven, that better Life, there is an eternal Sabbath, and those exalted Spirits need no Rest from that Labour, they constantly with the most lively Affections adore and worship God without ever wearying or languishing. Upon Earth, the best Saints are like a Bow, if it be long upon the Bend it loses its Strength and Force: But the Love of glorified Spirits is ever upon the Stretch and screwed up, and yet admits no diminishing of its Vigour and Activity; and this divine Fire eternally flames with the greatest Brightness, the Presence of God in Heaven works the same Miracle as it did in the Bush which Moses so much wondred at, it kindles

all the Souls in that happy Place, and makes them burn with the Love of God without any of them being ever consumed. There are no imperfect Ordinances in Heaven, no weak bodily Service; and *there is no Temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.* How may the best of us be ashamed, when we reflect upon our low carnal Worship, which is mixed with so much Impurity and Sin, and so little of Fervour and Heat? how ought we to blush who are so soon wearied and languish, grow faint and heavy in attending upon God, when we cast up our Eyes to these that are now in Heaven, who rest not Day and Night from celebrating the Holiness and Power of their God?

Though I have but slightly touched at what this Subject affords, yet, because of our Time, I shall only add upon this Head, that in that Day God will be, in a very direct Sense, to them *a Crown of Glory, and a Diadem of Beauty*, if we consider that the Lustre and Splendor of Heaven consists in God's being there, and that it will be the highest Dignity of the Saints Crown, that they then are Sons of God, and made like him. Their having the Image of the invisible God in their Souls, is more honourable, and clothes them with a truer Beauty than all the other Ornaments of Heaven. And then, God will be their highest Happiness and Pleasure, they will then be so elevatedly holy and pure, that their being made like God in Holiness will be their chiefest Joy; when they shall see God in himself infinitely perfect and happy; then Love to him will be such, that their Spirits will be filled with an Overflow

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of Delight, upon the Views that he is so glorious and great who possesses their Souls: In short, it will then be true in a full complete Sense, that they shall have none in Heaven but him, nor whom they desire besides him.

Thus I have endeavoured, in some Measure, to confirm and illustrate the Truth observed from the Words. Now, because it would take up too much of your Time to go through the other Things proposed, I shall finish this Discourse with an *Use of Exhortation*: Let us all be excited with our whole Soul and Strength to *seek this Kingdom wherein dwelleth Righteousness*, and to attain to the solid Hopes that we shall at last enjoy it. O blind stupid Sinners! who when the infinite incomprehensible Goodness of God proposes such excellent Glory to them, which is not only infinitely above their Merit, but above their Wishes and Thoughts; yet they prostitute their immortal Spirits to the vilest Lusts, and truckle to these tyrannical Masters, when God offers himself to be their Shield, Defence and Portion. O admirable Goodness! that our offended Maker should not only admit us to his Favour, and pardon our Sins, but that he himself should become our Happiness and Crown; this is a Condescension, the miraculous Grace whereof cannot be understood till we feel it, and this Diadem be placed on our Heads: And shall we be guilty of the infinite Folly, to neglect it while it is in our Offer? Will we prefer Vanity and Vexation of Spirit to this durable substantial Good? No, *let us lay aside every Weight*, and with the utmost Diligence and Application strive to attain to this

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Resurrection of the Dead. I shall conclude with these Three Motives to engage to doing so.

First. This is the most excellent and perfect Good, which justifies the Wisdom of our Choice. What can we wish for more, than that God should be our Reward? Surely it must be exceeding great, this, on its Prospect, will make us happy and content in this Life, and will fill us with undeceiving Joy in the next. They must be stupidly ignorant of the infinite God who doubt this Truth: He made us, all our Wishes, Inclinations and Desires depend upon him; and so he must be able to answer them all: Does God fill Heaven and Earth with his Presence, and the brightest Spirits feel his gracious Influences; and can he not give thy Soul an Overflow of Bliss? When this God is thy *Diadem and Crown*, thou shalt have as much Pleasure as thou can hold and contain; so that thou canst never have an unsatisfied Desire, or a remaining Wish, but God, like a River of Glory and Delight, will run through the most hidden Recess of thy Soul: There no Uneasiness shall attend thy Knowledge, no Cloud, no Defect: The Pains and Grief that are the Lot of even good Men, when they have different Views of Things here on Earth, shall then be done away, and in their place the Joy of eternal Agreement and Love shall without Interruption succeed: And God, with his own Hand, *will wipe all Tears from their Eyes*: In short, this Happiness *Eye cannot see, nor the Heart conceive*; and in Heaven it self, you shall see no more than you shall enjoy, for God will be your God.

2dly. God

2dly. God is not only the greatest but the only Good. If we could be happy without him, though in an inferior Degree, our Folly might be excusable: But whither can we go from God? For all are his, Heaven and Hell are under his Empire. We must either walk in his Light, and enjoy him for our Portion, or we must die by his Justice; there is no middle State, no Neutrality betwixt our Maker and his Enemies: And what Anguish and Horror will the Soul be filled with in Hell, when it shall reflect, that God declared it on Earth, that he would make his Power known in all Men, either by the Excellency of their Happiness or the Depth of their Torment; yet they choosed to be Objects of his Wrath, as if their Creator could not make them miserable, or Heaven and Hell had been trifling, and indifferent to them which should be their Habitations? *Let us be wise then, and be taught; for whoso sinneth against God, wrongeth his own Soul, and all they that hate him, love Death.*

3dly. This Happiness is not a vain Speculation and Figment, it is attainable by Sinners. The Glory of Heaven, if we could never come there, would be no Comfort to us: But this should make us couragious, diligent and indefatigable, because we may *run so as to gain the Prize*, and not to be *as those who fight beating the Air*: For *we have a new and living Way unto the holiest of all by the Blood of Jesus*; through his mighty Merits, Power and Intercession we may be accepted of God, and, overcoming all Difficulties and Dangers, be *more than Conquerors*.

I shall shut up this Discourse with a Prayer to God, that he may give us all, to be waiting for *this Glory, Honour and Immortality*; and, for that End, to be *denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, as becomes those who wait for this better City and nobler State. O, that we were wise and understood this, that we might consider our latter End.

ERRATA.

PAGE 12, Line 29. on read in. p. 47. l. 6. dele. after well. p. 53. l. 24. perfectest r. perfectest. p. 66. l. 27. Arms r. Armies. p. 77. l. 1. is it r. it is. p. 110. l. 28. elevated r. elevateth. p. 143. l. 1. undisturbed, calm r. undisturbed Calm. p. 159. l. 2. shaking r. shaking off. p. 183. l. 20. did r. did not. p. 219. l. 2. hima r. him that. p. 231. l. 33. to r. than to. p. 238. l. 18. 'tis being God's Will to r. its being God's, will. p. 322. l. 22. on it r. on in it. p. 358. l. 7. Perfection r. Perfection of. p. 396. l. 27. irrecoverable r. irreversible.

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